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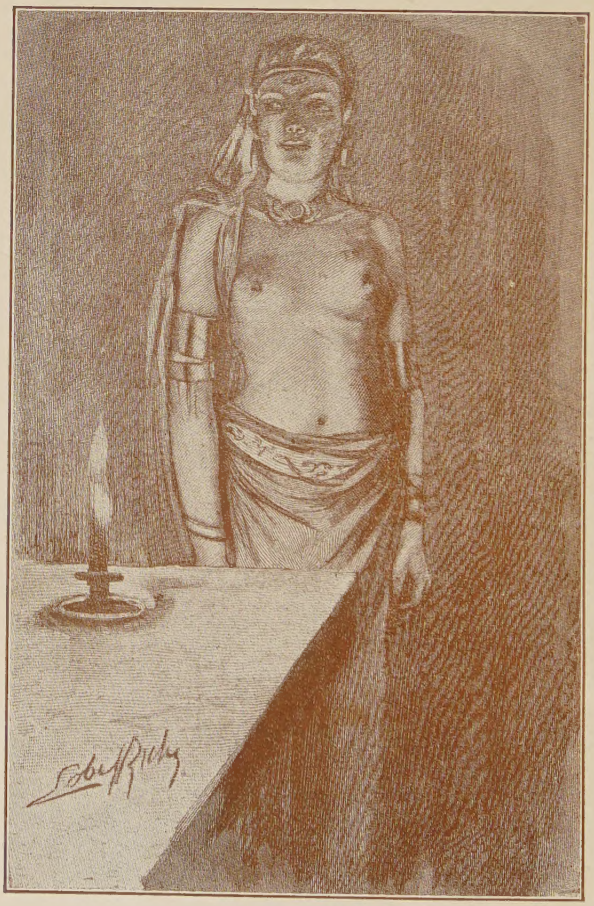

ALLOUMA

THE WORKS OF
GUY DE MAUPASSANT

LA VIE ERRANTE
ALLOUMA
TOINE

AND OTHER STORIES

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Guy de Maupassant

LA VIE ERRANTE;

OR, THE WANDERING LIFE

CHAPTER I

WEARINESS

I LEFT Paris, and France, too, on account of the Eiffel Tower.

It could not only be seen from everywhere, but it could be found everywhere, made of every kind of known material, exhibited in all windows, an ever-present and racking nightmare.

It was not only the thing itself, however, that created in me an irresistible desire to be alone for a while, but all that has been built up around it, within it, above it and in its neighborhood.

How can the newspapers have dared to speak of "new architecture" and refer to this metallic skeleton? Architecture, to-day the least understood and most forgotten of all the arts, is, perhaps, also the most esthetic, mysterious and richest in ideas of them all.

Throughout the ages, it as had the privilege of symbolizing, so to speak, each epoch; to represent, by means of a very small number of typical monuments, the manner of thinking, feeling and dreaming of a race and a civilization.

A few temples and churches, palaces and castles contain almost all the history of art in this world, conveying to our eyes better than books, by the harmony of their lines and the charm of their ornamentation, all the beauty and grandeur of an epoch.

I should like to know what will be thought of our generation, if some riot does not soon make this high and lanky pyramid of iron ladders crumble—that ugly, gigantic skeleton whose base seems to have been constructed to support a formidable monument of Cyclops, only to taper into a ridiculously thin profile like that of a factory chimney.

It is a problem that has been solved, people say. That is granted—although it might be said the whole discussion was of no use, but then I prefer the old idea of the ancient architects, of making again the naïve attempt of the Tower of Babel, just as those of the Campanile of Pisa did in the twelfth century.

The idea of constructing this graceful tower of eight stories of marble columns, tilting a little, as if it were about to fall sidewise, of proving to stupefied posterity that the centre of gravity is nothing but a useless creation of certain engineers, and that monuments can be built without bothering about it, and still be charming and attract more surprised visitors, after seven centuries' existence, than the Eiffel Tower will in seven months—constitutes a problem (since problem there must be) which is more original than that of that gigantic piece of ironware smeared with paint, only fit to please the eye of an Indian.

Yes, I know that another version of the story is that the Campanile bent over of its own accord.

Who knows? The pretty edifice keeps its secret, still discussed and still unsolved.

But what do I care about the Eiffel Tower? It was only the lighthouse of an international Kermess, according to the consecrated expression, the remembrance of which will haunt me like a nightmare.

Far be it from my mind to criticise this great political enterprise, the World's Fair, that showed the universe, just at the right moment, the strength, vitality, activity and inexhaustible richness of this surprising country—France.

Great pleasure, great amusement, as well as a great example were given to the people and the middle classes. They were highly satisfied and enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content.

But I merely decided from the very first that I was not made to appreciate such pleasures.

After visiting, with a sense of profound admiration, the section devoted to the display of machinery, the weird discoveries of science, mechanics, physics and modern chemistry; after satisfying myself that the Arabian dances are charming only when performed in their original setting, I remarked to myself that the fair would be an interesting place to go to once in a while, provided one could rest from the fatigue of it all at one's own home or at some friend's house.

But I never had had any idea of what Paris could become when invaded by the universe.

From early dawn the crowded streets resemble swollen currents. Every one is going to or coming back from the exposition or returning thither. In the street carriages in a long line give one the im-

pression of an endless train. Not one is free, and there is not a coachman who will drive you to another place than the fair or to his stable when he goes to change horses. Not a cab at the clubs. They are all working for the strangers; not a table at the restaurants and not a friend who dines at home or who will consent to dine at your house.

When you invite him, he accepts on condition that the dinner shall take place on the Eiffel Tower. It's more jolly! And they all, as if it were the password, invite you there every day of the week, either to have luncheon or dinner.

In this heat, dust, stench, perspiring crowd, amid greasy bits of flying paper, the odor of delicatessen and spilled wine, the breaths of three hundred thousand mouths, in the contact and friction with this overheated mass of flesh, this mixed sweat of all these different races, sowing their fleas, as it were, on the benches and in all the alleys—I thought it natural that one might, through curiosity, once or twice, try the cooking of these aerial restaurants, but I thought it astonishing that any one could dine every evening amid this filth and crowd as did the members of good society of the dainty class, the *élite,* who ordinarily affect to be nauseated by the people who toil and emit the odor of physical fatigue.

This proves definitely that the triumph of democracy is complete.

There are no more castes, races or aristocratic epidermis. We have now only two classes, the rich and the poor. There is no other classification to distinguish the degrees of modern society.

An aristocracy of another order is establishing itself, whose triumph was unanimous at the exposi-

tion, the aristocracy of science, or, rather, of scientific industry.

As for the arts, they are disappearing. The very instinct of art is dying out in the *élite* of the nation, who tolerated without protest the bristling ornamentation of the central dome and of some of the neighboring buildings.

The modern Italian taste is dominating us, and the contagion is such that the spots reserved for artists in this great, popular and *bourgeois* bazaar gave one the impression of an advertising show or a display pedlar's wares.

I should not protest against the reign of the scientists if the nature of their work and their discoveries did not constrain me to notice that they are, above all, commercial experimenters.

It is not their fault, perhaps. But it looks as if the course of human thought is dammed up between two walls, that can never be broken through: industry and commerce.

In the beginning of the many civilizations man's soul had recourse to art. One would think that a jealous divinity then said to him: "I forbid you to think of those things. Just concern yourself about your material life, like an animal, and I shall cause you to make a myriad of discoveries."

And, in fact, to-day the seductive and powerful emotion of the artistic centuries seems to be dead, while minds of another order are awakening to invent machines of all kinds, wonderful contrivances, mechanisms as complicated as the human body, or to combine substances and thereby obtain admirable and astonishing results. And all that to supply the physical wants of man or to kill him.

Ideal conceptions, such as pure and disinterested science, the science of Galileo, Newton and Pascal, seem to be lacking, while our imagination appears more and more excited by the desire of making discoveries useful to our existence.

But does not the genius of the man who, with one mental bound deduced, from the fall of an apple, the great law that rules the whole universe seem born of a more divine germ than that of the sharp American inventor, the marvellous manufacturer of bells, megaphones and lightning apparatus?

Is not that the secret vice of the modern mind, the sign of its inferiority in its triumph?

I may be entirely wrong. At all events, these things which interest us to-day in a practical way do not enthuse us as do the ancient forms of thought, emotional slaves as we are, of a dream of delicate beauty that haunts and spoils our lives.

I felt that it would be very pleasant to revisit Florence, and immediately resolved to do so.

CHAPTER II

NIGHT

Leaving the port of Cannes at three o'clock in the morning, we could still feel the breezes wafted from the land during the night. Then a slight breeze came from the open and impelled our yacht in full sail toward the Italian coast.

It is a boat of twenty tons, painted white, with an imperceptible golden thread surrounding it like

a girdle encircling a swan. Its sails of new canvas, beneath the rays of an August sun reflected in flames on the water, look like silvery, silken wings against the blue sky. The jibsails, light triangles, rounded out by a breath of wind, fly forward, and the mainsail is slack under its fifty-four-foot peak, which points upward like an arrow; the after-sail, the jigger of the boat, flaps in a sleepy way.

Soon every one is dozing on the deck. It is a typical summer afternoon on the Mediterranean Sea. The wind has died away; the fierce sun fills the sky and turns the sea into a soft bluish sheet, motionless and without a ripple, asleep, as it were, under a glittering mist that looks as though the water were sweating.

Notwithstanding the awnings which I had put up to protect me from the sun, the heat is so great that I am forced to go below and rest on a divan.

It is always cool inside. The yacht is of deep draught, built to navigate in northern seas and to resist rough weather. A crew and six passengers, or seven possibly, can live comfortably in this floating abode and eight can sit at dinner in the little dining-room.

The interior is finished in varnished pine, framed with teakwood, brightened by the brass of the locks, hinges and chandeliers, all the gay yellow brasses that belong to the luxury of yachts.

How strange this change after the clamor of Paris! I do not hear a sound now, not a sound. Every quarter of an hour, perhaps, the sailor at the helm, almost asleep, gives a slight cough, and the clock hanging on the wall makes a noise which

sounds formidable in this silence of the heavens and the sea.

And this ticking of the clock, which alone disturbs the quiet of the elements, gives me the wonderful sensation of those boundless solitudes where the murmurs of the worlds, hushed at only a few yards above their surfaces, are imperceptible in the silence of the universe.

It seems as if something of this eternal calm of space comes down and spreads itself over the motionless sea on this stifling hot day. It is oppressive, soporific, annihilating, like the contact with the infinite vacuum. The will surrenders, thought stops and sleep takes hold of both body and soul.

Night was approaching when I awoke. A few breaths of twilight breeze, hardly hoped for, swept us along until the sun went down.

We were very near the coast, in sight of the city of San Remo, but there was no hope of reaching it that night. Other villages or small towns were spread at the foot of the high gray mountain and looked like packs of white linen put out to dry on the beach. A mist hung on the slopes of the Alps, hiding the valleys as they spread upward toward the mountain crests that formed an immense dentated line against a rose-and-lilac sky.

Night came upon us; the mountains disappeared, and fires were lighted on the water's edge all along the coast.

A delicious odor of cooking, coming from the interior of the yacht, mingled agreeably with the salt sea air.

After dinner I lay at full length on deck. This quiet day of drifting had wiped out all there was in

my mind as a sponge clears a tarnished glass, and memories came crowding upon my thoughts, memories of the life I had left behind me, of people I knew well, had seen or loved.

Nothing makes the mind travel and the imagination run riot like being alone at sea, under the sky, on a hot night. I felt excited, vibrating in all my being, as if I had been drinking some heady wine, inhaling ether or were still in the embrace of a beloved one.

The nocturnal coolness moistened my skin in a sort of imperceptible bath of salt-water vapor. The slight shiver caused by the cooling air went through my limbs, entered my lungs, and body and soul were refreshed, almost beatified.

Are they happier or less happy, those who experience sensations through the entire surface of their skin as perfectly as they do through the medium of their eyes, mouth, nostrils or ears?

It is a rare and much-to-be-dreaded faculty, perhaps, this highly nervous and morbid excitability of the epidermis and of all the senses which converts the slightest physical impression into an emotion, making one feel sorrowful and joyful according to the changes of temperature, the odors emanating from the soil, the color of the daylight.

To be unable to enter a theatre because the contact with crowds affects in an inexplicable manner the entire organism; to be unable to go into a ballroom because the fictitious gaiety and the whirling motion of the waltzers irritate like an insult; to feel suddenly happy or melancholy, without any apparent reason, according to the decoration, the hangings or the combinations of light in a room, and to

experience, through the combination of certain perceptions, an indefinable physical satisfaction which nothing can reveal to persons of a coarser grain—is it a happiness or a misfortune?

I do not know, but if the nervous system is not sensitive to a point which reaches pain or ecstasy, it can only give us very ordinary sensations and vulgar gratifications.

This sea mist was like a caress, filling me with happiness. It spread over the heavens, and I watched with delight the stars enveloped in gauze-like veils, looking somewhat paler in the dark firmament. The coast had now disappeared behind this vapor, which floated over the waters and put a halo round the stars.

One would have thought that some supernatural hand had packed the earth in fleecy clouds, as if about to send it to some unknown destination.

Suddenly, through this snowy shadow, a sound of distant music, from an unknown source, came over the sea. I thought some aerial orchestra was hovering in space to give me a concert. The faint but clear sounds, delightfully sonorous, came across the night in a murmur of opera.

A voice spoke beside me:

"Why," said the sailor, "it's Sunday, and there's music in the public park of San Remo."

I listened, so much surprised that I was afraid it was only a dream. I listened a long while, infinitely charmed, to the nocturnal music wafted by the breeze through space.

But now the sound swelled, became louder and seemed to rush toward us. It was so weird that I got up to listen. It was becoming more and more

distinct, every sound, and was evidently approaching me; but how? Upon what phantom raft would it appear? It was coming nearer and nearer, but so rapidly that I peered into the darkness excitedly; and next, as if by magic, I was bathed in a hot breeze, redolent of aromatic plants, bearing as on a wave the strong perfume of myrtle, mint, citronella, immortelles, gum mastic, lavender and thyme scorched on the mountain by the summer sun.

It was the land breeze which was springing up, laden with the breath of the shore, and carrying out to sea, intermingled with the odor of the Alpine plants, those wonderful harmonious strains of music.

I remained breathless, intoxicated with such delightful sensations that my troubled senses seemed to be in a delirium. I really did not know whether I was breathing music, or hearing perfumes, or even sleeping up in the stars.

This perfumed breeze blew us out to sea, where it evaporated in the night. The sounds gradually died out as the ship moved on.

I could not sleep, and I wondered how a modern poet of the so-called symbolist school would have explained the confused nervous vibration which I had just experienced and which seems to me, to speak plainly, inexplicable. No doubt some of those poets who take such pains to give expression to the multifarious artistic sensitiveness of thought would have come out with honor, giving in euphonious rhymes, replete with intentional sonorousness, incomprehensible yet slightly perceptible, a fair description of this extraordinary blending of perfumed sounds, starry mist and sweet land breeze, sowing music in the night air.

A sonnet from their patron, Baudelaire, came back to my mind:

Nature is a temple where living columns
Sometimes allow jumbled words to escape;
Man walks through a forest of symbols
That watch him with familiar looks.

Like long-drawn echoes mingling in the distance,
In a dark and deep unity
As vast as night, as vast as light,
Perfumes, colors, and sounds answer each other.

There are perfumes as sweet as a child's lips,
Sweet as a clarinet, green as the meadows,
—And others, again, strong and overpowering,
Having the breadth of infinite space,
Like ambergris, musk, benzoin, and incense,
Which exalt the enraptured mind and senses.

Had I not just felt the true meaning of this verse to the very marrow of my bones:

Perfumes, colors, and sounds answer each other.

And not only do they answer each other in nature, but within us, too, and lose themselves sometimes "in dark and deep unity," as the poet says, by the repercussion of one sense on another.

Medical science is fully aware of this. Many articles have been written on the subject under the title of *Colored Audition.*

It has been proved that, in certain nervous and high-strung natures, when one sense receives a shock which affects it, the concussion of the impression is communicated, in the same manner as the ripples of a wave, to the other senses, each of which responds in its own peculiar way. Thus music in certain beings evokes visions of the different colors It must then be a kind of contagion of impressions transformed according to the normal action of each cerebral apparatus thus affected.

In this way can be explained the famous sonnet by Arthur Rimbaud, which speaks of the colors of the vowels, an article of faith which has been adopted by the school of symbolism:

A, black; E, white; I, red; U, green; O, blue; vowels.

Is he right or wrong? As far as the man who breaks stones on the road, and many of our great men, too, are concerned, this poet is an impostor or a fool. But, in the mind of others, he has discovered and expressed an absolute truth, though these explorers of minute perceptions must always differ a little in their opinions on the colors and pictures that may be evoked in us by the mysterious vibrations of vowels or of an orchestra.

If it is recognized by the science of to-day that musical notes affecting certain organisms can arouse visions of colors; if *sol* can be red; *fa,* lilac or green, why could not these same sounds arouse tastes in the mouths and odors in the nostrils? Why should not fastidious though somewhat hysterical natures be affected by everything through the medium of every one of their senses at the same time, and why, too, could not the symbolist reveal a delightful sensitiveness to those of their own sort, incurable and privileged poets that they are? This is more a question of artistic pathology than of estheticism pure and simple.

Is it not possible, however, that some of those interesting writers—enthusiastic neuropaths—have reached such a degree of excitability that every impression received creates in them a concerted action of all the perceptive faculties?

And is that not the very thing which their strange

poetry of sounds, apparently unintelligible, tries to express when it makes a melody of the whole gamut of sensations, and by the mere grouping of words seeks to obtain untranslatable meanings, clear enough to them, but obscure to us?

For artists have come to an end of their resources; nothing is unpublished, unknown in the field of emotion, of imagination, in any line. Since the beginning of time all the flowers of this particular field have been culled. And now it happens that, in their powerlessness to create, they feel in a confused and indefinite way that there may, some day, be a broadening of the soul and the senses. But the mind at present has five half-opened, padlocked gates, known as the five senses, and it is at these five gates that men enamored of the new art are tugging with all their might.

The mind, that blind and hard-working Unknown, can know, understand, discover nothing except through the senses. They are its only purveyors, its only agents between Universal Nature and itself. It works exclusively on the materials furnished by them, which they, in turn, can gather only in proportion to their own sensitiveness, strength and acuteness.

The value of the mind evidently depends directly upon the value of the senses, and its breadth is limited to their number.

Monsieur Taine, however, has masterfully studied and developed this idea.

There are five senses and only five. They reveal to us, by interpreting them, certain properties of surrounding matter, which contains hidden also an

unlimited number of other phenomena that we are incapable of perceiving.

Suppose man had been created without ears; he would exist in much the same manner as now, except that to him the universe would be mute; he would have no conception of noise, of music, which are but transformed vibrations.

But suppose he had been given other organs, powerful and sensitive, gifted with the faculty of transforming into nerve perception the actions and attributes of all the inexplicable things that surround us—how much more varied would be the extent of our knowledge and emotions.

It is into this impenetrable domain that every artist attempts to enter by tormenting, violating and exhausting the mechanism of his mind. Those whose brains have given way—Heine, Baudelaire, Balzac, Byron, the vagabond, who sought death, disconsolate at the misfortune of being a great poet; Musset, De Goncourt, and so many others—were they not all shattered by this very effort to break down the material barrier that imprisons the human mind?

Yes, our senses are the nurses and the masters of artistic genius. The ear begets the musician and the eye gives birth to the painter. All senses coöperate to give the poet his sensations. With the novelist the sense of vision usually predominates. It does so to such an extent that it becomes easy to detect, on reading a sincere and well-written novel, the physical qualities and attributes of an author's glance. The magnifying of details, in their importance or minuteness, whether they encroach on the general scheme or not, goes to show all the degrees

and differences of myopia. The coördination of the whole, the proportion of the lines and the preferred perspective to a certain minuteness of observation, the careless omission of some slight information which would be a clue to the characteristics of a person or a group—do not these indicate the far-seeing though careless glance of a far-sighted person?

CHAPTER III

THE ITALIAN COAST

The sky is veiled by clouds. The dawning day has a grayish tint, through the mists which spread like a wall, thicker in some places, between us and the rising sun.

A vague fear saddens us that until evening these clouds will keep nature mourning, as it were, and we are continually throwing impatient glances at the sky like a silent prayer.

But we can guess, by certain lightened spots which now and then divide the more opaque masses, that the sun is shining above these clouds and is illuminating the blue sky and their snowy surface. We wait and hope.

Little by little they become paler, thinner and seem to melt. One feels that the sun is burning them, gnawing them and even crushing them with all its ardor; that the immense ceiling of clouds is too weak to resist, and that it must break and part under the great weight of glaring light.

A small spot lightens up in the midst and a faint

glimmer is seen. A breach is made, through which glistens the sunshine, spreading as it falls. It looks as if this little hole were on fire. It is like a mouth opening wider and wider, all ablaze, with flaming lips, pouring on the waves a cascade of golden light.

Then, simultaneously in a thousand places, the shadowy arch breaks and goes to pieces, allowing a hundred arrows to rain down on the water through its wounds, thus scattering over the horizon the full joyousness of the radiant sun.

The air has freshened through the night; a quiver of wind caresses the sea, hardly causing a ripple, with so slight a tickling of its blue, silky surface. In front of us, on a high, rocky peak, which seems to rise out of the sea and lean upon the hills, nestles a little town, painted rose color by the hand of man, as the horizon is by the victorious dawn. A few blue houses, here and there, make charming blue dots, as it were. It looks like the abode of a princess of the *Arabian Nights*. It is Port-Maurice.

When one has seen it thus one ought not to land there. I did, however.

It has the appearance of a ruin. Its houses, strewn like crumbs along both sides of the streets. All one side of the city which has fallen down, probably during an earthquake, toward the shore, has ledges from top to bottom of the hill, on which are roofless, dismantled dwellings, old houses of plaster, through which the wind blows. And the tinting, so pretty from a distance where it harmonized with the rising sun, on closer view shows a woefully faded, smeared effect, tarnished by the sun and washed out by the rain.

Throughout the streets, tortuously winding corri-

dors full of stones and dust, floats a nameless odor, so penetrating, so strong, so tenacious that I hurried back to the yacht, my eyes full of dust, my stomach upset.

Yet it is one of the principal towns of that province. To one first setting foot in this part of Italy it looks like a flag of misery.

Facing it, on the other side of the gulf, is Oneglia, a very filthy and ill-smelling town, though it is less wretched look and more lively.

Under the large portals of the Royal College, which stand wide open during the vacation, an old woman sits mending a filthy mattress.

We enter the harbor of Savona. A large group of manufactories or foundries, whose chimneys are fed every day by the coal brought here by four or five English steamers, emit through their giant openings volumes of curling smoke that fall back on the city in a shower of soot, blown here and there by the wind, like snow from Hades, as it were.

Never go into that harbor, sailors of small sailing vessels, if you wish to keep your pretty white sails clean.

Savona is charming, though a typical Italian town. Its narrow streets are full of bustling merchants, with fruit spread on the ground, ripe, red tomatoes, black or yellow grapes, transparent, as if filled with light; green lettuce, its leaves stripped in a hurry and scattered over the ground, giving one the impression of an invasion of the city by vegetable gardens.

After returning to the yacht I saw along the wharf, on an immense table which filled the deck of

a Neapolitan boat, a startling sight—something strange that looked like a murderers' banquet.

Bleeding, murderously red, as it were, giving the boat a color and air of a butchery, a massacre, of torn flesh even, were spread out in front of thirty swarthy sailors sixty or perhaps a hundred quarters of the blood-red watermelons.

It looked as if these men were burying their teeth in raw flesh, as do captured wild animals in their cages. It was a feast. The crew of a near-by ship has been invited. Every one is happy. The red caps on their heads are not half so vivid in color as the heart of the fruit.

When night had fallen upon us I went back to the town.

The sound of music attracted me to the other side of the town. I struck an avenue where groups of *bourgeois* and common people were walking leisurely toward the evening concert, given two or three times a week by the municipal band.

These orchestras in this musical country are equal, even in the smaller towns, to those of our best theatres. I recalled the one I had heard on the deck of my yacht one night, the memory of which remained as one of the sweetest sensations I ever experienced.

This avenue ended in a square almost on the beach, and there, in the semi-darkness, relieved by only a few yellow gaslights, the orchestra played, I do not quite remember what pieces, close to the water's edge.

The waves rolled heavily along the beach with their monotonously regulated rhythm, which seemed to accompany the lively music of the instruments. The violet sky, filled with a golden dust of stars

which gave it an almost violet gleam, blended slowly into the shadows of night and fell on the silent crowd, hardly to be heard whispering, as some walked around the enclosure for the musicians, sat on benches in the promenade, on lonely rocks on the beach or on large beams to be used to finish the construction of the framework of the big ship beside them.

I cannot say whether the women of Savona are beautiful, but I do know that they are charming as they go bareheaded at night, each carrying a fan. It was fascinating, this noiseless beating of imprisoned wings, white, black or spotted, all fluttering like large moths held between the fingers. Each woman, whether resting or walking, carried a fan and this vague effort of the leaves, as it were, to escape, while they seemingly made the air cooler, gave a feminine, coquettish something which was most agreeable to a man.

Presently, in the midst of the waving fans and uncovered heads all about me, I began to fancy myself in fairyland, as I was wont to do when a mere boy at boarding school in the cold dormitory at night, when, before dropping off to sleep, I mused on the contents of a novel secretly devoured under the cover of my desk. Sometimes, too, deep in my worn heart, poisoned with incredulity, there is an awakening, for a few instants, of the simple innocence of my boyish heart.

One of the most beautiful things that can be seen in this world is Genoa viewed from the sea.

At the head of the bay the city rises as if from

out of the water. On both sides, which make a curve around Genoa, as if to protect and caress it, fifteen small towns, neighbors, vassals, servants, reflect and bathe their light-colored houses in the waters. To the left are Cogoleto, Arenzano, Voltri, Pra, Pegli, Sestri-Ponente and San Pier d'Arena; to the right Sturla, Quarto, Quinto, Nervi, Bogliasco, Sori, Recco, Camogli, the last white spot on the cape of Porto-Fino, which closes the gulf on the southeast.

Genoa rises above her immense harbor on the first hill of the Alps, which stand out behind it like a giant wall. On the jetty is a small square tower, a lighthouse, called "The Lantern," which looks like a gigantic candle.

We pass into the outer port, an enormous basin, well sheltered, where innumerable tugboats steam about, looking for customers; then, after rounding the eastern jetty, we enter the port itself, crowded with ships, those ships of the south and the Orient, with their delightful coloring, the triangular, one-masted ships, painted and rigged in the most fantastic manner, carrying on their prows blue or gilt Madonnas or even strange-looking animals, which are regarded as sacred protectors.

This fleet, with its good Virgins and talismans, is lined up along the wharves, their pointed and uneven bows turned toward the centre of the basin. Then come the powerful steamers, situated according to the company to which they belong, narrow and high, with colossal outlines. There are also, in the midst of these sea pilgrims, brigs and three-masted ships, clothed, like the Arabs, in dazzling white, across which the sunlight glides.

If there is nothing prettier than the entrance to the port of Genoa, equally there is nothing uglier than the entrance to the city. The wharf is a swamp of rubbish and the narrow streets are enclosed like tortuous corridors between two winding rows of very tall houses, from which emanate pestilential and sickening odors.

One feels in Genoa as in Florence, still more so in Venice, that these once aristocratic cities have fallen into the hands of the people.

Here is recalled the memory of those fierce men who fought or transacted business on the seas, who then, with the money thus obtained or from conquests or barterings had those astonishing palaces built which still line the principal streets. When we enter these magnificent residences, odiously daubed by the descendants of those great citizens of the haughtiest of all republics; when we compare the style, the courts, the gardens, the porticos, the interior galleries and all the decorative and gorgeous appointments, with the barbaric wealth of the finest mansions of modern Paris, with the palaces of millionaires who only know how to handle money, who are utterly incapable of conceiving, desiring or creating something new and beautiful at the same time —we understand, then, that the real supremacy of the intelligence, the meaning of the rare beauty of form, the perfection of proportions and lines have disappeared from our democratic society, composed now of rich financiers without taste and parvenus without traditions.

It is even an interesting thing to observe the hackneyed and commonplace atmosphere of the modern hotels. Enter the old palaces of Genoa and you

will see a series of courtyards with galleries and columns, marble staircases of marvellous beauty, all of which were designed and executed by true artists for men of cultivated taste.

Enter the old châteaux of France, and you will notice the same tendency toward a new and original ornamentation.

Then enter any one of the wealthiest homes of Paris at the present time and you will admire curious ancient objects, carefully catalogued, labelled and exhibited in glass cases, according to their known value, vouched for by experts, but in no instance will you be struck by anything original and new in the different parts of the mansion itself.

The architect is supposed to construct a beautiful house, costing several millions, of which he is to receive a certain percentage, according to the amount of work he puts upon it.

The upholsterer, for a given remuneration, takes charge of the interior decoration. As the gentlemen of this industry are not unaware of their clients' lack of artistic knowledge, and as they would not dare suggest anything new to them, they are perfectly satisfied to repeat what they have already done for others.

After one has visited, in Genoa, these ancient palaces and admired a few paintings, especially the three masterpieces of Van Dyck, there is nothing more to see except the Campo-Santo, which is a modern cemetery, an extraordinary museum of funeral structures, the most wonderful, the most dismal, the most comical in all the world. All along the four sides of an immense gallery, in a giant cloister, opening on a yard paved with the flat white

gravestones of the poor, one passes a series of statues of tradesmen mourning their dead.

What an extraordinary, mysterious idea! The work, in its polished execution, in the chiseling of these figures, bespeaks a remarkable technique and a highly artistic talent. The material of the robes, of the waistcoats and trousers is depicted in a most realistic manner. I saw a figure wearing a *moiré* silk gown, the reproduction of which, with its folds and creases, was indescribably realistic; and yet, in my opinion, nothing is so ridiculously grotesque, ignominiously commonplace as the method of people who thus mourn their beloved ones.

Whose is the fault? The sculptor is the one to blame, as he saw only what was commonplace in the physiognomy of the modern tradesman, and it is no wonder, for they can no longer distinguish the divine spark which the Flemish artists had so well seized and which they reproduced when they depicted even the most ordinary and sometimes the ugliest types of their race. It may be that the *bourgeois* himself is to blame, he who has been tossed about by this low, democratic civilization like a pebble on the beach, whose distinctive characteristics have been worn away, and who has lost, in this constant friction, the last marks that remained of the originality with which all social classes were endowed by nature.

The Genoese are very proud of this astonishing museum, which only bewilders the observer's mind.

From the port of Genoa to the point of Porto-Fino is a series of towns, a scattering of houses on

the beach, between the light blue of the sea and the brilliant green of the mountain. A breeze from the southeast compels us to tack. It is not strong, though its sudden gusts make the yacht keel a little to one side or dart suddenly ahead, like a runaway horse, and both sides are adorned with streaks of white foam. Then the wind abates, the boat regains its quiet pace, now gliding nearer the shore, now farther from it. About two o'clock the captain surveys the horizon with his glass to make out, according to the quantity of sails and the tacking of the other vessels, the direction and strength of the wind, which, in these parts, sweeps with great suddenness across the water or comes in gentle zephyrs, as capricious as the moods of a pretty woman.

"We'll have to take in sail, sir," he announces; "the two schooners ahead of us have just hauled down their topsails. Heavy winds over there."

The order was given and the inflated canvas slid down from the top of the mast, flapping limply and palpitating somewhat as a bird that has just been shot.

There were no waves. A few ripples foamed a little here and there, but suddenly in the distance I saw the water was white as if some one had thrown a sheet over it. It was coming, approaching rapidly, and when this white line was a few yards away from us the sails of the yacht sustained a violent, abrupt shock from the wind that seemed to gallop over the sea, scattering the flying spray, which resembled feathers plucked from the breast of a swan. All this foam torn from the waters, this thin layer of flying froth flew about and was scattered by the invisible whistling attack of the squall. With our

vessel lying on its side, almost submerged by the water which dashed noisily against the deck, with weather shrouds taut, with masts and spars creaking, we sped along at a furious pace, speed-mad, as it were. It really is a unique sensation, this excitement of holding between your hands, with muscles strained from head to foot, the iron bar that guides through the storm this wild yet inert animal made of canvas and wood.

This fury of the air lasted only three-quarters of an hour. Then suddenly, when the Mediterranean had resumed its beautiful blue tint, it seemed to me that the wrath of the sky was appeased, so calm became the atmosphere. It was a fit of passion that had passed away, the end of a rough morning; and the joyous laugh of the sun again spread across space.

We were just approaching the cape, where I perceived at its extreme point, at the foot of a steep rock, a church and three houses. Who on earth could live there? What can the people do? How can they communicate with other living beings except through one of the little canoes pulled up on the narrow beach?

Now we have doubled the cape. The line of the coast is uninterrupted until Porto-Venera is reached, at the entrance of the Gulf of Spezzia. All this region is incomparably fascinating.

In a wide, deep bay opening before us we can see Santa-Margherita, then Rapallo and Chiavari and farther away Sestri-Servante.

The yacht, having tacked about, glided along only two cable lengths from the rocks, and at the end of the cape, which we had just rounded, we discovered

suddenly a gorge where the sea enters, a gorge hidden away, barely seen, filled with pine, olive and chestnut trees. The tiny village of Porto-Fino is built in semi-circular form about this quiet basin.

We sailed slowly through the narrow strait which joins this delightful natural harbor to the sea and entered the amphitheatre of houses, crowned by a forest of a refreshing green hue, both being reflected in the quiet, round mirror where a few fishing smacks seem to be dozing.

One of them, manned by an old sailor, comes toward us. He greets and welcomes us, points to a place for anchoring, takes hold of our cable to moor us to the shore, returns to offer his services and advice; in fine, does the honors of this fishing hamlet. He is the harbor master.

I never, perhaps, experienced a pleasanter sensation than when I entered this delightful green creek. I had a feeling of rest, soothing to the nerves, such as is afforded by the relaxation from the vain struggle of life's battles; and even the delightful sensation of hearing the noise of the falling anchor, telling me we were to remain here for some time, was as nothing compared to the first feeling.

For the last eight days now I have been rowing. The yacht is motionless in the middle of this quiet miniature harbor, and I meander in my canoe along the coast, in the grottoes where the ocean roars in invisible gaps, and around strange, lonely little islands, which it showers with endless kisses at each uprising, and over rocks wholly submerged in water or covered with seaweeds. I love to see, floating under the water, waving in the barely sensible motion of the waves, those long red or green weeds, in

which are mingled and hidden, some even gliding in and out of the plants, numberless throngs of young fishes just hatched. One would take them for the live progeny of silver needles.

When I glance up at the rocks on the banks I see groups of naked boys, with swarthy little bodies, all of whom stare in surprise at me. They are innumerable, like the young fishes of the sea, just like a tribe of young new-born tritons, frolicking and scampering up the granite rocks to drink in the glorious air.

We have left Porto-Fino to spend a little time at Santa-Margherita. It is not a seaport, but it lies deep in a gulf, somewhat sheltered by a mole.

Here the land is so fascinating that it makes one forget the sea. The city is protected by two mountains converging to an angle and divided from one another by a valley leading to Genoa. On both these hills innumerable little paths between two stone walls three feet high intersect one another, go up and down, cross and recross, now narrow and stony, now assuming the form of ravines or stairs as they divide countless fields or rather orchards of olive and fig trees, garlanded with red vines. Through the foliage of the latter, climbing in the trees, we can catch a glimpse of the blue sea, red capes, white villages, sloping pine forests and the high mountain crests of gray granite. In front of the houses, scattered here and there, may be seen women making lace. In fact, throughout these parts you could hardly strike a doorway where there are not two or three of these women employed in this hereditary work, handling

with delicate fingers numerous white or black threads, from which dangle, with a continual hop and skip, little yellow-colored sticks. These women are often pretty, tall and of proud demeanor, though careless in dress and not at all coquettish. Many still show traces of Saracen blood.

One day, in the street of a hamlet, one of them passed near me, leaving me an impression of such exquisite beauty as I never had seen before.

Under a heavy mass of dark hair which waved around her forehead, evidently betraying a hasty, careless arrangement, were the oval, brown features of an oriental or a daughter of the Moors, whose graceful carriage she still retained, but the Florentine sun had tinted her skin with gold. Her eyes—such eyes!—were large and of the deepest black, and she seemed to let escape unconsciously a caress through the longest and thickest eyelashes I ever had beheld. Hhe skin around her eyes was darkened so strangely that had I not seen her in full daylight I should have suspected her of having had recourse to art.

When we meet such beautiful creatures in tatters, why can we not seize them and carry them away, if only to adorn them and tell them they are pretty and lose ourselves in the raptures of admiration? What if they do not understand the mystery of our enthusiasm, remain irresponsive, like all bewitching idols, made only to be loved by frenzied beings, trying to find words worthy of expressing the praise of their beauty?

However, if I had the choice between the most beautiful of living beings and that of the famous

picture of a woman painted by Titian, which I saw again a week later in the great Council Hall, I would take Titian's reclining woman.

Florence—which appeals to me as the city where I should most ardently have loved to live in the olden times—still retains, for my eyes and my heart, an inexpressible charm, which attracts me, almost in a sensual manner, through the painting of this woman, the quintessence of a dream, prodigiously carnal in its suggestions! When I think of this city, so full of marvels that one invariably returns exhausted at the end of a day of sightseeing as a hunter is exhausted by walking, there rises up amid my recollections, like a sudden brightness, the remembrance of the long piece of canvas, on which this tall woman lies, naked and blonde, awake and serenely calm.

Then, after thus recalling the powerful seductive charm of a human body, the thought of the sweet and pure Madonnas rises in my mind, those of Raphael first, the "Madonna of the Goldfinch," the "Madonna Granduca," the "Madonna of the Chair" and others, besides those of the minor artists of the ancient times, with their innocent features, light hair, ideal and mystical, and those of the more material artists of a robust, healthy appearance.

As one wanders about this unique city, and even throughout the whole of Tuscany, where the men of the Renaissance strewed masterpieces with a free hand, one is filled with amazement at the exalted and fertile imagination, drunk with beauty, madly creative, of those former generations pulsating with artistic frenzy. In the churches of the small towns, where one goes to see things that have

not already been pointed out to the ordinary traveller, one discovers on the walls, or at the back of the choir, priceless paintings of those modest masters, who did not sell their canvases in the yet unexplored America, but kept on working, though hopelessly poverty-stricken, for art's sake, like pious workmen.

And this race, which never faltered in its course, has left nothing inferior. The same ray of imperishable beauty that appeared from the brush of painters and from the chisel of sculptors grew larger in the shape of lines of stones on the face of the monuments. Their churches and chapels are filled with sculptures of Lucca della Robbia, Donatello, and Michelangelo; their bronze portals are by Bonannus or by John of Bologna.

Upon reaching the Piazza della Signoria, facing the Loggia dei Lanzi, we perceived, grouped together under the same portico, the "Rape of the Sabines" and "Hercules Wrestling with the Centaur"; "Nessus," by John of Bologna; "Perseus with the head of the Medusa," by Benvenuto Cellini, and "Judith and Holofernes," by Donatello. It sheltered, also, only a few years ago, the "David" of Michelangelo.

But the more one is bewildered, the more one is overcome by the seductive charm of a trip through this forest of works of art, the more one is seized, too, with a strange, uneasy feeling which soon mingles itself with the joy of seeing. It comes from the amazing contrast of the modern crowd, so commonplace, so ignorant of what it is looking at, and of the places it inhabits. You readily feel that the delicate soul, the proud and refined soul of the

former race that filled the land with masterpieces, no longer exists in these heads with round, chocolate-colored hats, nor does it animate the indifferent eyes, exalt the vulgar tastes and desires of this dreamless, matter-of-fact population.

On my way back to the coast, I stopped at Pisa, to see the cathedral square again. Who will ever be able to explain the melancholy, penetrating charm of certain of those almost dead towns?

Pisa is one of them. No sooner have you entered it than you feel a melancholy languor, a powerless desire to remain and to run away, to flee from this listless lazy life and yet to stay and undergo the mournful charm of its sky, its heaven, its houses, its streets that are inhabited by the quietest, the saddest, and the most silent of people.

Life seems to have left it as did the sea, when it abandoned its port, formerly supreme, and stretched a plain and gave birth to a forest between the new shore and the forsaken city.

The River Arno glides through like a yellow undulating streak, between high walls supporting the two principal promenades lined with rows of yellow houses, some hotels, and a few modest-looking palaces.

Standing alone on the wharf itself, where it cuts the gleaming line of the river, the little chapel of Santa Maria della Spina, belonging to the French architecture of the thirteenth century, shows its artistically wrought profile directly above the water. It looks on the bank of the river like a quaint Gothic laundry belonging to the Virgin Mary, where

the angels come nightly to wash all the tarnished tinsel of the Madonnas.

But through the Via Santa Maria one reaches the Square of the Cathedral.

For those who are still affected by the beauty and the mystical power of architecture, assuredly nothing is more wonderful and thrilling than this vast, grass-carpeted square hemmed in by high enclosures, within which stand, in their totally different positions, the Cathedral, the Campo-Santo, the Baptistry, and the Leaning Tower.

When you reach the edge of this wild and deserted field, surrounded by old walls, suddenly before your eyes rise these four enormous marble structures, so extraordinary in their profile, color, harmonious and superb grace, and you are paralyzed with astonishment and admiration, as if you were before the rarest and most grandiose spectacle that human art can offer to your gaze.

But soon the Duomo attracts and rivets your whole attention with its inexpressible harmony, the irresistible power of its proportions and magnificent grandeur of its façade.

It is a basilica of the Tuscan style of the eleventh century, built of white marble with black and colored inlaid work. You do not experience, at the sight of this perfect example of Roman-Italian architecture, the same awe you feel in the presence of Gothic cathedrals, with their daring height, the elegant charm of their towers and belfries, the stone lacework in which they are enveloped, and the enormous disproportion between their size and their base.

But you remain so entranced with the irreproach-

able proportions, the beauty of the lines, of the decorations of the façade below, of the pilasters connected by arcades above, of four galleries of columns, each growing smaller, that the attraction of the monument reminds you of a beautiful poem.

It is useless to describe these things; one must see them in their own classical sky, of a peculiar blue, where the clouds, rolling above in silver masses, seem to have been copied from the paintings of Tuscan artists. For those old artists were realists, thoroughly imbued with the Italian atmosphere; and those who have imitated them under another sky are only the counterfeiters.

Behind the Cathedral, the Campanile, forever leaning over as though about to fall, gives one an uncomfortable feeling, upsetting our notions of equilibrium; and facing it is the Baptistry, which, with its tall conical cupola, stands before the door of the Campo-Santo.

And in this ancient cemetery, whose frescoes are classed as paintings of special interest, stretches out a delightful cloister, with a subtle and gloomy charm, in the midst of which two lime trees hide beneath their foliage such a quantity of dead wood that the wind shakes it with a strange sound like the rattling of bones.

The days go by and the summer is drawing to an end. I wish to see another far-away country, where other men have left memories, less vivid, perhaps, though none the less eternal. These people are the only ones that have really endowed their country with a Universal Exposition that will always be visited in all centuries to come.

CHAPTER IV

SICILY

People are convinced, in France, that Sicily is a wild country, difficult of access, and even dangerous to visit. Now and then a traveller, who is thought very daring, takes the risk of going as far as Palermo, and returns saying that the city is a very interesting one. And that is all. But in what respect are Palermo and Sicily interesting? No one knows. In truth, the whole thing is only a question of fashion. This island, the pearl of the Mediterranean, is not on the list of those countries usually visited by tourists, which it is considered in good taste to know, which, like Italy, make up a part of the education of a well-bred man.

From two special points of view, however, Sicily should attract travellers, because its natural and artistic beauties are as singular as they are wonderful. Every one knows how fertile is this land, which was once known as the granary of Italy, and which all nations, at one time or other, invaded and mastered, so strong was their desire to possess it, which was the cause of so many men fighting and dying for her sake as if she had been a beautiful woman, ardently desired. It is, just as much as Spain, the country of oranges and the land of flowers, whose air, in springtime, is like a perfumed breath; and every night it kindles, far above the sea, the monster lantern of Etna, the largest volcano in Europe. But what constitutes it, above all, a land unique and most interesting in this world

is, that it is, from one end to the other, a strange and divine museum of architecture.

In this century, which is still artistic, architecture is dead in the sense that it seems to have lost the faculty of creating beautiful things in stone, the mysterious secret of the charm of artistic lines, the feeling of grace in architecture. We do not seem to understand any longer that even the simple proportions of a wall may convey to the mind the same artistic delight, the same deep and secret rapture, as is afforded by the sight of a masterpiece of Rembrandt, of Velasquez, or of Paolo Veronese.

Sicily had the good fortune to be occupied by prolific nations, one after another, from both south and north, who covered its territory with works of infinite variety, in which blend, in an unexpected and charming manner, the most contrary influences. From this has sprung a special art, unknown elsewhere, where the influence of the Arab is felt in the midst of Greek and even Egyptian memories, where the harshness of the Gothic style brought here by the Normans is tempered by the wonderful art of Byzantine ornamentation and decoration.

And it is a source of genuine delight to look for the special marks of each school in these exquisite monuments, to discern, here the detail from Egypt—the lanceolated arch, brought by the Arabs, the arched vaults in high relief, or rather pendent sculpture, resembling the stalactites of marine grottos, and there, the genuine Byzantine ornament, or the beautiful Gothic friezes which awaken memories of the tall cathedrals of colder countries or the low churches built by Norman princes.

After seeing these monuments, which, though be-

longing to different periods and being of different origin still have the same character, the same nature, one can truly say that they are neither Gothic nor Arabic nor Byzantine, but Sicilian; one can assert that there is a Sicilian art and style, forever recognizable, which is assuredly more delightful, varied, more highly colored and full of conceptions, than all the other styles of architecture. It is also in Sicily that the most magnificent and complete examples of ancient Greek architecture can be found, in the midst of scenery of peerless beauty.

The passage from Naples to Palermo is the easiest and the best one to take. One is astonished, upon first leaving the boat, at the activity and life of this city of two hundred thousand inhabitants, which is filled with shops. It is noisy, though less animated than Naples, in spite of the fact that it is quite as full of life. The first thing to attract your attention, especially, are the carts. These are little square boxes perched on yellow wheels, decorated with crude and odd designs, representing historical facts, adventures of all kinds, contests, and even the meetings of sovereigns, but especially the battles of Napoleon I and those of the Crusaders. A peculiarly shaped piece of wood and iron secures the body of the cart to the axle; spokes of the wheels are also made of carved wood. The animal that draws it wears a gay-colored cotton ball on his head and another one on the back, and is harnessed with coquettish, colored straps, each piece of leather being adorned with red wool and tiny bells. These painted carts, queer-looking and each one different from the other, passing through the streets, attract

the eye like conundrums we are continually trying to solve.

The general appearance of Palermo is peculiar. The city, lying in the midst of a vast amphitheatre of barren mountains of a grayish blue, tinted here and there with red, is divided into four parts by two long, straight streets, forming a cross in the middle. From this crossroad you see, on three sides, the mountain at the end of the immense corridors of houses, and on the fourth the sea, a deep blue spot, which appears to be quite close, as if the town had tumbled into it.

A strong desire haunted my mind, on the very first day of my arrival. I wished to see the Chapel Palatine, which I had been told was a marvel of marvels.

The Chapel Palatine, the most beautiful in the world, the most surprising religious jewel ever evolved by the human mind and the hand of an artist, is inclosed within the heavy edifice of the Palais-Royal, an ancient fortress built by the Normans.

This chapel has nothing remarkable in its exterior, but as we enter the palace we are immediately struck with the beauty of the interior, which is surrounded by columns. A beautiful winding staircase gives a perspective of startling effect. Facing the entrance door, another door, cut through the wall of the palace, opens suddenly on a deep and narrow horizon, revealing an endless expanse of country and boundless vistas, which greet the eye through this arched gap and carry one in imagination into boundless lands and limitless dreams as

one gazes toward the blue crest of the hills in the distance, above an immense orange grove.

Upon entering the chapel, you are overcome with awe, as when first beholding a most surprising sight whose power is felt before it is understood. The calm and beauty of this little church, which is positively the most wonderful masterpiece imaginable, cause you to stand entranced before these walls with immense mosaics on a golden background, shining with a soft light that dimly illumines the whole edifice, leading one's mind into biblical and sacred landscapes, where one sees, in fancy, standing against a burning sky, all those who were associated with the life of Christ.

What renders the impression produced by these Sicilian monuments so striking is the fact that their decoration is at first more noticeable than their style of architecture.

The harmony of lines and proportions is only a framework for the blending of the colors.

On entering our Gothic cathedrals, we experience a stern, almost gloomy, sensation. Their grandeur is impressive; but their majestic stateliness does not captivate us. Here we are conquered, affected by that almost sensual impression which color adds to the beauty of form.

The men who conceived and executed these luminous though dark churches must have had an entirely different idea of religious feeling from that of the architects of German and French cathedrals; and their particular concern was that the light should enter these wondrously decorated naves in such a way that it would neither be seen nor felt, but would glide in imperceptibly, just skimming the

walls and producing mysterious, delightful effects, as if the illumination came from the walls themselves, or from the golden ceilings peopled with apostles.

The Chapel Palatine, built in 1132 by King Roger II, after the Norman-Gothic style, is a small basilica with three naves. It is only thirty-three metres long by thirteen wide, a toylike affair, a miniature basilica.

Two rows of beautiful marble columns of different colors lead to the cupola, where a colossal figure of Christ, surrounded by angels with outstretched wings, looks down on you. The mosaic which forms the back of the side chapel to the left is a striking work of art. It represents St. John preaching in the desert. You would take it for a Puvis de Chavannes, but more highly colored, more forceful, more natural, with less affectation, executed at a period of deep religious faith by an inspired artist. The apostle is seen speaking to a few people. Behind him is the desert, and beyond that a few blue mountains whose soft outlines are lost in the mist—mountains so familiar to the Oriental traveller. About the saint, around and behind him, is a golden sky, a true sky of wonders where God seems to dwell.

Returning to the entrance, we stop beneath the pulpit, a single square of red marble, surrounded by a frieze of white marble, inlaid with small mosaics and supported on four columns delicately chiseled. One wonders at what the taste of a true artist can accomplish with so little.

The wonderful effect in all these churches is due to the contrast of the marbles and the mosaics. It

is this that furnishes their characteristic work. The lower parts of the walls, which are white and are ornamented only with traceries like delicate stone embroideries, bring out forcibly, by the very fact of their simplicity, the wealth of color in the paintings above.

But you discover, even in that fine tracery that runs like colored lacework along the lower wall, delightful things about the size of your palm; for instance, two peacocks, whose beaks are intertwined, carrying a cross between them.

This style of decoration is to be found in many churches in Palermo. The mosaics of the Martorana are, perhaps, even more remarkable in their execution than those of the Palatine Chapel; but there cannot be found in any other monument the same marvellous completeness that makes this divine masterpiece unique.

I come back slowly to the Hotel of the Palms, which has one of the finest gardens in the city, one of those typical gardens of tropical countries, filled with enormous and strange plants. A traveller, seated on a bench, gives me in a few words the events of the past year, and going back to the memories of bygone years, he says, among other things: "This happened when Wagner lived here."

Astonished at this, I inquired: "What, here, in this hotel?" "Why, yes, it was while here that he wrote the last notes of *Parsifal* and corrected the proofs."

And I learn that the illustrious German master spent a whole winter in Palermo, and that he left this town only a few months before his death. Here, as everywhere else he lived, he showed his ungovern-

able temper and unendurable pride, while he left the impression of being the most unsociable of men.

I wished to see the apartment occupied by this master musician, for it seemed to me that he must have left something of his strong personality, and that I should perhaps find some beloved object, a favorite chair, or the table at which he had worked. Surely some trace of his sojourn here, or, at least, the souvenir of a mania, or the indication of some habit.

At first I saw only a beautiful hotel apartment. I was shown the changes he had made here and there, the couch in the middle of the room, which he covered with brilliant rugs worked in gold.

Then I opened the door of a mirrored cabinet.

A delicious and powerful perfume blew out, like the caress of a breeze that has passed over a field of roses.

The proprietor of the hotel, who was my guide, said: "He kept his clothes in here, after perfuming them with essence of roses. This odor will never evaporate."

I inhaled, for a few seconds, this breath of flowers, inclosed in this piece of furniture, forgotten here, a captive; and it seemed, in truth, as if I had found something of Wagner in this perfume which he loved—a little of his personality, of his desires, of his soul, in this mere trifle, of the secret and cherished habits which go to make up a man's individuality.

I then went out and wandered about the town.

No one is less like a Neapolitan than a Sicilian. In the lower classes a Neapolitan is always three-fourths a clown. He gesticulates, becomes dis-

turbed and excited without cause, expresses himself by gestures as well as by words, is always pleasant when he has an object to gain, is gracious through cunning as well as by nature, and always answers disagreeable remarks with some smooth saying.

But in the Sicilian one sees a great deal of the Arab. He has his sedateness of manner, combined with the active mind of the Italian. His native pride, his love of titles, the very nature of his pride, and even his features, make him more like a Spaniard than like an Italian. But that which gives one at all times the impression of the Orient is the peculiar voice, the nasal intonation of the street criers. One hears everywhere this shrill note of the Arab, which seems to come down from the forehead to the throat, instead of, as in the north, rising from the chest to the mouth. And the drawling song, monotonous and soft, heard through the open door of a house as we pass by, is surely the same, as to rhythm and accent, as that sung by the rider clothed in white who guides travellers through the endless and bare regions of the desert.

At the theatre, though, the Sicilian becomes Italian again; and it is very interesting to attend an operatic performance in Rome, Naples, or Palermo.

Every impression of the public is expressed as soon as felt. Excessively nervous, gifted with an ear as true as it is sensitive, loving music to distraction, the entire audience becomes a sort of vibrating animal, which feels but does not reason. In the space of five minutes it will applaud an actor with enthusiasm and hiss with frenzy; it stamps with joy or with rage, and if a false note escapes

from the throat of the singer, a most peculiar shrill, exasperated cry bursts from every throat at the same time. When opinions differ, the hissing and cheering are deafening. Nothing is allowed to pass unnoticed by these attentive and quivering hearers, who express every moment, and sometimes, seized with sudden anger, roar as would a menagerie of wild animals.

Carmen just now fascinates the Sicilian people, and one hears from morning till night the famous "Toreador" air hammed in the streets.

The streets of Palermo are not remarkable in any way. They are wide and well kept in the richer sections, and resemble in the poorer ones the narrow, winding, and tortuous lanes of all Oriental towns.

The women, dressed in gowns made of bright red, blue, or yellow rags, sit chatting before their doors, watching passers-by with their brilliant black eyes shining under a forest of dark hair.

Sometimes in front of the building of the official lottery, which is a permanent institution, like a religious service, bringing in a large revenue to the state, you witness a funeral though comical incident.

Facing this building is a Madonna in its niche, with a lantern at its feet. A man comes out of the office, his lottery ticket in hand, puts a sou in the collection box that opens its little black mouth in front of the statue, and then makes the sign of the cross with the numbered ticket which he has just commended to the favorable attention of the Virgin, backing up his appeal with an alms.

Stopping here and there before the windows of the shops, your eye is soon attracted by a strange

photograph that represents an underground tunnel, full of dead bodies, grinning skeletons, oddly clothed. One reads underneath: "Cemetery of the Capuchin Friars."

What can this be? If you ask an inhabitant of Palermo, he replies with disgust: "Don't go to see that horrible thing. It is a barbarous affair, which will disappear before long, thank goodness! Besides, no one is buried there any more."

It is difficult to obtain more detailed information, such is the horror the Sicilians have o fthese extraordinary catacombs.

This is, however, what I succeeded in finding out. The earth of the ground on which the convent of the Capuchin Friars is built possesses the peculiar property of hastening the decomposition of dead flesh, so that in a year there is nothing left on the bones but a dried, black skin, which clings to them, retaining sometimes the hair of the heads and cheeks.

The coffins are inclosed in small lateral vaults, each one containing eight or ten bodies, and when the year has passed the coffins are opened, and these horrible mummies, bearded and convulsed, as if howling in racking pain, are taken out. Then they are hung up in one of the principal corridors, where the family can visit them from time to time. People who wished to have their bodies preserved in this manner asked for it before they died, and they will remain forever hanging under these dim vaults, like objects kept in museums, in consideration of a stipulated sum paid annually for that purpose by the remaining relatives. When the latter cease to pay the bodies are buried in the usual manner.

I was possessed at once by a strong desire to visit this sinister collection of departed beings.

At the door of a small convent of most unpretending appearance, on old Capuchin friar, clad in a brown robe, received me without a word, and led the way, knowing very well what strangers come here to see.

We cross a poor chapel, and with slow steps descend a stone staircase, and, suddenly, I see before me an immense corridor, high and wide, whose walls are covered with skeletons, clothed in the strangest and most grotesque fashion. Some are hung up, side by side, others lie on five stone tables, one over the other, from the floor to the ceiling. A row of dead bodies is standing up in a solid row on the ground, and their heads seem about to speak. Some are covered with a hideous vegetation, which distorts still more the jaws and bones; others again retain their hair, others a bit of mustache, others a few hairs of their beard.

Some look upward with their empty eyes, others look down; here are some that seem to be grinning horribly, and others that are contorted as if in pain; others again seem affrighted by some supernatural apparition.

They are clothed, these poor, hideous and ridiculous dead, clothed by their family, who have had them taken from their coffins and placed in this appalling assembly. Nearly all have some sort of black robe, the hood of which is sometimes drawn over the head. But there are some who were dressed sumptuously; and a miserable skeleton, with a headdress consisting of a cap of Greek embroideries, and wrapped in a dressing gown, like that of a man of

wealth, lies on its back, as if sleeping a terrifying though comical sleep.

A placard, like that a blind man carries, hangs from the neck, bearing the name and the date of death. These dates cause a shiver to go through one's very bones: 1880—1881—1882!

This, then, was a man eight years ago. It lived, laughed, spoke, ate and drank, and was full of joy and hope. And there it is now! Before this double row of indescribable beings, coffins and boxes are heaped up; some are expensive coffins in ebony, with brass ornaments and small, square glass openings. One would think they were trunks, valises of savages, that were bought in some bazaar by those who were setting out on the long journey, as people used to say.

But other corridors open to the right and left, indefinitely lengthening out this immense subterranean cemetery.

Here are the women, still more grotesque than the men, for they have been dressed up in a coquettish manner. The heads seem to look at you, confined as they are by caps with ribbons and lace showing as white as snow, around those black faces decayed and worn away by the strange action of the soil. The hands, resembling the severed roots of a tree, peep out from the sleeves of a new robe, and the stockings that inclose the bones of the leg seem empty. Sometimes the skeleton has only shoes on, great, clumsy shoes for the poor dried-up feet.

Here are young girls, hideous young girls, in their white garments, with a crown of metal around the head, as the smybol of innocence. They grin so horribly you would take them for very old women.

And yet they are sixteen, eighteen, twenty. It is horrible.

We then reach a gallery full of little glass coffins. These are the children. The bones, hardly formed, have not been able to resist. And one can hardly distinguish anything, such is the distorted and fearful appearance presented by these poor little wretched beings. But you are moved to tears, for the mothers have dressed them in the last garments they wore on earth. And the parents come to see them thus.

In many instances a photograph hangs above the skeleton, showing the child as it looked when alive, and nothing is so startling as this contrast evoked by the comparison of the two, and the thoughts it evokes.

We go through a darker and lower corridor, that seems to have been reserved for the poor. In a dark corner are apparently a score of them, hung up under a transom, through which blows the outer air in fitful gusts. They are clothed in a sort of black linen, tied at the neck and feet, and they all lean over one another. They look as if they were freezing and wanted to get away, and even shouting: "Help! Help!" You might take them for the crew of some ship, still buffeted by the wind, clad in the brown and tarred oilskins worn by the sailors in a storm.

And here is the part set aside for the priests. A large hall of honor. At first sight they seem more horrible to look at than the others, clothed in their sacred vestments—black, red, or purple. But, when you look at each one separately, a nervous and irresistible smile is evoked at their strange and weirdly

comical attitudes. Here are some that look as if they were about to sing; others seem to be praying. Some one has raised their heads and crossed their arms. Some wear the biretta of an officiating priest, which, placed on the fleshless brow, now and then falls rakishly over the ear or else over the nose. It is the carnival of death, rendered more incongruous by the gilded richness of ornamentation of the sacerdotal garments.

Now and then, it is said, some of the heads roll to the ground, the cords of the neck having been gnawed by the mice. Thousands of these live in this human-flesh warehouse.

The remains of a man who died in 1882 were shown to me. A few months previous, full of life and thoroughly happy, he had come to choose his place, accompanied by a friend. "I shall be there some time," said he laughingly.

The friend comes back alone now and gazes for hours at a time at the motionless skeleton, standing erect at the place he had pointed out himself.

On certain feast days the catacombs of the Capuchin Friars are opened to the public. A drunkard once fell asleep there and woke up in the middle of the night. He called, shrieking with fright and running about on all sides in his desperate effort to escape; but no one heard him. He was found next morning, clinging so tightly to the bar of the entrance gate that he was removed with difficulty. He had become insane. Since that day a large bell has been hung near the doorway.

After this gloomy visit I felt the desire to see some flowers, and I drove to the Villa Tasca, the

gardens of which in the midst of an orange grove are filled with magnificent tropical plants.

On returning to Palermo I saw at the left a small town about half way up a hill, and on the summit was a ruin. This town is Monreale and the ruin is Castellaccio, the last refuge of the Sicilian brigands, I was told.

Théodore de Banville, the master poet, wrote a treatise on French prosody which all would-be poets ought to know by heart. One of the chapters of this excellent book is entitled "Concerning Poetic License," and when you turn the page you read:

"There is none."

Thus, on reaching Sicily, one asks sometimes from idle curiosity, again from anxiety: "Where are the brigands?" and every one answers you, "There are none."

There have been none for the past five or six years. Thanks to the secret complicity of certain landed proprietors, whose interests the brigands served as often as they plundered them, they managed to exist in the mountains of Sicily until the arrival of General Palavicini, who is still the commanding officer in Palermo. But this officer pursued them with such energy that the last of them disappeared in a short time.

It is true that there are often attacks by armed men, and assassinations are still frequent; but these are crimes committed by lone criminals and not by organized bands as formerly.

After all, Sicily is as safe a country for any traveller as England, France, Germany or Italy, and those who are seeking adventures of the *Fra Diavolo* sort had better look elsewhere.

The truth is that a man is safe anywhere except in the large cities. If one would take the trouble to count the number of travellers held up and plundered by bandits in wild countries and those assassinated by the wandering tribes of the desert and compare the accidents that happen in these places, reputed so dangerous, with those that occur in a month in London, Paris or New York, we should find how comparatively safe these dreaded regions are.

Moral: If you are looking for cutthroats go to Paris, or London, or New York, but do not come to Sicily. In this country you can go about the highways day and night without an escort and unarmed; you will meet only people who are exceedingly gracious to strangers, except, perhaps, those employed by the post and telegraph offices. I speak, however, only of those of Catania.

About half way up one of the mountains which overlook Palermo is the little town called Monreale, famous for its ancient monuments; and in the vicinity of this city, perched far up in the mountains, the brigands used to conduct their operations. The practice of placing sentinels along the road that leads to it is still continued. Do they thereby wish to reassure the travellers or to scare them? I do not know.

The soldiers stationed at each turn of the road remind one of the legendary sentinel of the War Department in France. For ten years, without any known reason, a soldier was placed on sentry duty in the corridor leading to the minister's apartments, with instructions to keep passers-by away from the wall. Now, it happened that a new minister, of an inquisitive turn of mind, on succeeding fifty others

who had passed this functionary without paying special attention to him, asked whence came this custom.

No one could tell him, neither the cabinet minister nor any of his colleagues. But one of the ushers, who probably kept a careful diary, recalled that a soldier had been put there formerly because the wall had been freshly painted and the minister's wife, not having been cautioned, ruined her gown. The paint had dried, but the sentinel remained.

And so the brigands have disappeared, but the men are still to be seen on duty. The road winds round the mountain and finally reaches the city, which is peculiar, highly colored and very dirty. The streets are in steps, which seem to be made of sharp teeth. The heads of the men are bound in red handkerchiefs, after the Spanish fashion.

Here is the Cathedral, a great edifice, more than three hundred feet long, the shape of a Latin cross, with three apses and three naves, separated by eighteen columns of Oriental granite, resting on a base of white marble and a pedestal of gray marble. The entrance, which is really admirable, contains two magnificent bronze doors, made by *"Bonannus, civis Pisanus."*

The interior of this building displays the most complete, the richest and the most startling work in mosaic decoration that can be found anywhere.

These mosaics, the largest in Sicily, cover the walls entirely—a surface of six thousand four hundred metres. Just picture to yourself these immense and superb decorations, which represent, throughout the whole church, the mythical stories of the Old Testament, of the Messiah and of the Apostles. On a golden sky, all round the naves, you can see, larger

than life-size, the prophets announcing the coming of the Redeemer, then Christ and those who lived in His time.

Back of the choir an immense figure of Jesus, whose features resemble those of Francis I., commands the whole church, seeming to fill it and crush it, so large and impressive is this strange figure.

It is to be regretted that the ceiling, destroyed by a fire, should have been redecorated in the crudest manner. The loud tones of the gilding and coloring are very displeasing to the eye.

Quite close to the Cathedral we enter the old cloister of the Benedictines. Let those who have a liking for cloisters go and walk through this one, and they will at once forget almost entirely any others they may have seen before.

How could one help worshipping cloisters, those quiet, secluded and cool spots, invented, it would seem, to inspire the deep, clear thought that flows freely from the lips while one walks slowly under these long, melancholy arcades?

How especially do they seem to have been made to engender day dreams, these stone paths, with small columns enclosing a garden which rests the eye without causing it to wander, without diverting one's attention.

But the cloisters in our countries are sometimes a little too severely monastic, too sad, even the most beautiful of them, like that at Saint-Wandrille, in Normandy. They cause a tightening of the heart and make one feel gloomy.

Let any one visit the dreary cloister of the Chartreuse in the Province of Verne, among the wild

mountains of the Moors. It strikes a chill to one's marrow.

The wonderful cloister of Monreale, on the contrary, gives you such a sensation of beauty that you would fain remain in it for an indefinite length of time. It is very large, square, of a pretty and delicate elegance; no one that has not seen it can even understand the harmony of a colonnade. The exquisite proportions, the incredible slenderness of all these slight columns, as they stand two by two, each pair different, some in mosaics and others plain—these covered with sculptures of peerless delicacy and those ornamented with a simple design carved in the stone and climbing and clinging round them like ivy—astonish the gaze, charm it, giving birth to that artistic delight which one feels in the presence of perfect taste.

And, like these pretty little columns, the capitals are also of a charmingly varied design. One is astonished at the very rare combination of the admirable effect of the whole and the perfection of every detail.

One cannot view this masterpiece of artistic beauty without recalling the verses of Victor Hugo on the Greek artist who could put

> Something as beautiful as the human smile,
> On the profile of the Propylæa.

This beautiful walk is enclosed between very high and very old walls, with pointed arcades. It is now all that is left of the convent.

Sicily is the birthplace, the true and only country of colonnades. The interior courts of the old palaces and houses of Palermo contain some that

are beautiful, which would be renowned anywhere, but particularly so in this island so rich in monuments.

The little cloister of the Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti, one of the oldest churches of Norman architecture with an Oriental character, though less remarkable than that of Monreale, is still superior to anything of the kind with which I am familiar.

On leaving the convent one enters the garden where one can look down upon the whole valley full of blossoming orange trees. A continuous breeze rises from this perfumed forest, a breeze that enraptures the mind and disturbs the senses. The vague, poetical craving that forever haunts the soul, prowling about, maddening and unattainable, here seems on the point of being satisfied. This odor surrounds one, mingling the refined sensation of perfumes with the artistic joys of the mind, throws you for a few seconds into a well-being of mind and body that is almost happiness.

Upon raising my eyes toward the high mountain towering over the city, I perceive on its summit the ruin I had noticed the day before. I learn upon inquiry that that château was the last repair of the Sicilian brigands. Even to-day very few people ever go up to this ancient castle, called Castellaccio. The path, on a high hill difficult of access, is hardly known. But we are bent upon going there. One of the gentlemen of Palermo, who is doing the honors of his country, insists upon giving us a guide. Unable to find a guide sure of his way, he applied, unknown to us, to the chief of police, and in a short time a man of whose real calling we were ignorant began the ascent of the mountain with us.

But he himself hesitates, and, meeting another man, he asks him to join us. Thus we have now a guide for our guide. They question every one they meet. Finally a priest advises us to go straight ahead of us. And we begin to climb, followed by our leaders.

The road now is almost impracticable. Rocks must be scaled, and we must use every bit of our strength to raise ourselves from one place to another. And this lasts a long while.

We finally reach the summit where the castle itself is buried in a wonderful chaos of enormous gray stones, smooth or sharp-pointed, which surround it and spread far out on all sides.

The view from this summit is one of the most wonderful to be seen anywhere. All round this bristling hill are deep valleys enclosed by other hills, broadening out toward the interior of Sicily into an endless horizon of peaks and summits. Facing us is the sea, at our feet Palermo. The city is surrounded by that forest of orange trees which has been called "the shell of gold," and this forest of black verdure spreads like a dark stain at the foot of grayish and reddish mountains, which seem burned, wasted and gilded by the sun, so bare and yellow are they.

One of our guides has disappeared, the other follows us into the ruins. They are of a beautiful wildness and quite extensive. One sees readily that no one visits them. Everywhere the ground sounds hollow under our feet; sometimes an entrance to the subterranean passage may be seen. The man examines them with curiosity and tells us that many brigands lived there formerly. This was their safest

refuge and the one most dreaded. As we are about to descend the first guide reappears, but we decline his services and find without difficulty a very easy path which could be used even by women.

The Sicilians seem to have taken pleasure in exaggerating and multiplying stories of bandits to frighten strangers; and to-day travellers hesitate to land on this island, which is as quiet and as safe as Switzerland.

To illustrate this I give one of these adventures with these terrible malefactors, which I guarantee to be true. A very distinguished entomologist of Palermo, M. Ragusa, discovered a coleoptera which for a long time had been confounded with the *Polyphylla Olivieri*. Now, a German scientist, M. Kraatz, recognizing that it belonged to an entirely distinct species, desired to possess some specimens of it, and wrote to one of his Sicilian friends, M. di Stephani, who in his turn addressed himself to M. Giuseppe Miraglia, to beg him to capture for him some of these insects. But they had disappeared from that part of the country. Just at this time M. Lombardo Martorana, of Trapani, announced to M. di Stephani that he had just got more than fifteen polyphylla.

M. di Stephani hastened to inform M. Miraglia in the following letter:

MY DEAR JOSEPH: The Polyphylla Olivieri, having had warning of your murderous intentions, has taken another route, and has found a refuge on the coast of Trapani, where my friend Lombardo has already captured more than fifteen individuals.

Now the adventure takes on the tragi-comic character of an epic.

At this time the neighborhood of Trapani was infested, it seems, by a brigand named Lombardo. Now, M. Miraglia had thrown his friend's letter into the wastebasket. A servant emptied the basket in the street; then the street cleaner passed by and carried out to the dump heap the refuse that he had gathered. A peasant crossing that part of the country saw a pretty bit of blue paper, only slightly rumpled, picked it up and put it in his pocket, partly through precaution and partly through an instinctive desire to turn it, some way or other, into money.

Several months passed. Then this man, having been appointed to a collectorship, threw away the letter. A policeman picked it up and presented it to a judge, who immediately fell upon these words: "Murderous intentions . . . taken another route . . . found refuge . . . captured . . . Lombardo."

The peasant was imprisoned, questioned, almost tortured. He knew nothing. They kept him imprisoned, and a severe examination was begun. The magistrates published the suspicious letter, but as they had read "Petronilla Olivieri" instead of "Polyphylla," the entomologists took no notice of it.

Finally they deciphered the signature of M. di Stephani, who was summoned to court. His explanations were not admitted. M. Miraglia, questioned in his turn, finally cleared up the mystery.

The peasant had remained three months in prison. One of the last Sicilian brigands was then in reality known as a species of bug, christened by men of science under the name of *Polyphylla Ragusa*.

To-day there is no less dangerous occupation than that of travelling in Sicily, either in a carriage or on

horseback, or even on foot. All the more interesting excursions can be made in carriages. The first one to be undertaken is that to the Temple of Ségasta.

So many poets have sung the praises of Greece that every one thinks he knows it, and carries a mental picture of the country, such as he would like it to be or as it looks in his dreams.

Sicily has realized this dream in my case; it pictures Greece to me, and when I think of that land of the arts I seem to see tall mountains, with soft classical outlines, and on their summits those severe-looking temples, somewhat massive, perhaps, but admirably majestic, which one meets everywhere in this island.

Every one has seen Pæstum and admired the three superb ruins scattered on this bare plain, of which the distant sea seems a continuation, and enclosed on the other side by a large curve of bluish hills. But if the Temple of Neptune is in better condition and in purer style (so it is said) than the temples of Sicily, these latter are placed in such unexpected marvellous landscapes that words cannot render the impression they leave on the mind.

On leaving Palermo you first reach the extensive forest, known as "The Shell of Gold," and then a railway follows a shore of reddish mountains and rocks. The road finally leads toward the interior of the island, and we leave the train at the station of Alcamo-Calatafimi.

Then we go through a country that undulates like monstrous waves on a motionless sea. There are no forests, few trees, but plenty of vines and cultivated fields, and the road lies through two uninter-

rupted rows of blossoming aloes. They look as if, according to certain instructions, they had all grown to the same height, forming the immense, weird hedgerow and column sung by so many poets. You can see, far in the distance, a multitude of these warlike plants, which are thick and sharp-pointed, carrying with them, as it were, the weapons and banner of battle.

After about two hours' travelling you suddenly perceive two high mountains, joined by an easy path, shaped like a crescent, which rises between their summit, and in the middle of this crescent is the profile of a Greek temple, one of those impressive and beautiful monuments that a bygone artistic nation erected to its demi-gods.

You must go round one of these hills by a winding road and then you can see the temple once more, but this time you see it in full. From here it looks as if it were leaning against the mountain, from which it is really separated by a deep ravine, but the mountains spread all around it as if to shelter it. It stands out distinctly, with its thirty-six Doric columns against the curtain of verdure, which forms a background for this enormous monument, standing alone in this solitary, limitless country.

You feel, on seeing this magnificent landscape, that nothing but a Greek temple could be erected here, and only here would it be in harmony with its surroundings. This Temple of Ségasta was placed at the foot of the mountain by a man of genius, who appears to have been inspired as to the exact position it should occupy. It brightens up the wide landscape; it vivifies it and makes it divinely beautiful.

On the top of the mountain whose base we circled

to reach the temple we find the ruins of the theatre.

When you travel in a country that the Greeks have colonized it is only necessary to find their theatres to get the finest views. That of Ségasta, on the crest of a mountain, is the centre of an amphitheatre of small mountains, whose circumference is one hundred and fifty to two hundred kilometres. You discover a few more summits behind these, and through a wide valley facing us we perceive the sea, which is a deep blue in the midst of all this green.

When you have seen Ségasta you can go to see Sélinonte, an immense pile of columns that have fallen in a row, side by side, like dead soldiers, or else are crumbled in a heap. The ruins of these giant temples, the greatest in Europe, fill a large plain and also cover a small hill beyond that. They follow the beach of light-colored sand, where are moored a few fishing smacks, without any place in sight that fishermen might inhabit. This shapeless heap of stones, however, can interest only archæologists or poetical souls affected by all traces of the past.

But Girgenti, the ancient Agrigentum, situated like Sélinonte on the southern coast of Sicily, offers the most extraordinary collection of temples that one could possibly find.

At the side of a long, stony, barren hill of a reddish tint, without a blade of grass or a shrub, and overlooking the sea, the beach, the seaport, three magnificent stone temples are silhouetted from below against the blue of a southern sky.

They appear to stand in the air unsupported, in the middle of a magnificent though desolate land-

scape. Everything around them is dead—that is, dry and yellow. The sun has burned and destroyed the earth. Is it the sun, after all, that has bleached the soil in this manner or the deep fire that forever burns in the veins of this volcanic island? For all around Girgenti is stretched the peculiar country of the sulphur mines. Everything in the vicinity is sulphurous—the earth, the stones, the sand.

The temples, eternal abodes of the gods, dead like their human brothers, remain on their wild hills, with only a distance of half a kilometer between them.

The first is that of the Lacinian Juno, which contained, it is said, the famous painting of Juno by Zeuxis, who had for models the five most beautiful girls of Acragas.

Then the Temple of Concord, one of the temples of antiquity still in the best state of preservation, which was used as a church in the Middle Ages.

Farther away are the remains of the Temple of Hercules, and last the Temple of Jupiter, praised by Polybius and described by Diodorus, constructed in the fifth century and containing thirty-eight half columns, eighteen feet in circumference. A man can stand erect in each fluting.

Seated on the roadside, which runs along the foot of this wonderful coast, one dreams in presence of these wonderful monuments of the greatest of all artist nations. It seems as if the whole of Olympus were before us, the Olympus of Homer and the Greek poets, the Olympus of charming, carnal gods, who were of the same clay and as passionate as we are, who impersonated, in a poetical manner, the

tender love of our hearts, the dream of our souls and all the instincts of our senses.

Antiquity itself rears its head against this ancient sky. A powerful and strange feeling comes over us, a desire to kneel before the august remains left here by the masters of our masters.

There is certainly something divine about this Sicilian land, for if we find these last abodes of Juno, Jupiter, Mercury or Hercules we also meet the most remarkable Christian churches in the world. The remembrance of the cathedrals of Cefalu or Monreale and of the Palatine Chapel, that marvel of marvels, remains even deeper and more powerful than that of the Greek monuments.

At the end of the hill of the Temples of Girgenti begins a most extraordinary country, which might be the Kingdom of Satan; for if, as it was believed in ancient times, the devil inhabited a vast subterranean region, filled with melting sulphur, where he boiled the souls of the damned, then without a doubt it was in Sicily that he elected to have his mysterious abode. Sicily supplies almost the whole world with sulphur. Thousands of mines may be found in this island of fire.

But first, a few kilometers from the town, we come across a little strange-looking hillock, called Maccaluba, which is composed of clay and limestone and covered with small cones two or three feet high. You might take them for blisters, some terribly monstrous disease of nature, for they emit a warm mud as if the soil were suppurating, and sometimes they hurl stones to a considerable height, roaring and throwing out foul gases. They growl, as it were,

these horrible leprous little volcanoes, these running sores.

We next wish to visit the sulphur mines. We then go into the mountains. Before us stretches a desolate country, a wretched soil, which appears to have been cursed by nature. The valleys are gray, yellow, stony and sinister, bearing the stigma of a divine reprobation in their solitude and poverty, which nevertheless possesses a certain grandeur.

Finally we reach a few miserable-looking buildings. Here are the mines of which there are more than a thousand in the neighborhood, it is said.

On entering the enclosure of one of them you notice, at first, a singular hillock, grayish and smoky. It is a real sulphur well, made by human hands.

But on the other side of the island, a few hours from the coast, is one of the most wonderful phenomena that can be seen anywhere. I mean the island of the volcano, that fantastic flower of sulphur, which blooms in mid-ocean.

You leave Messina at midnight in a wretched steamboat, where the first-class passengers are unable to find a seat, even on deck.

Not the slightest breeze; the boat alone disturbs the quiet of the night.

The shores of Sicily and those of Calabria exhale such a powerful odor of blossoming orange trees that the whole channel is perfumed by it, as if it were a lady's bower. The city is soon left behind, and you pass between Scylla and Charybdis. The mountains become lower, while above them appears the flat and snowy summit of Mount Etna, silvery in the light of the full moon.

Then we fall asleep for a while, lulled by the

monotonous noise of the ship's paddles, and we awaken to find that it is almost daybreak.

Now we are opposite the Lipari Islands. The first on the left and the last on the right emit a thick white smoke. They are the Volcano and Stromboli, and between them may be seen the Lipari, the Filicuri, the Alicuri and a few other low and small islands.

Lipari, where we land first, is composed of a few white houses, at the foot of a green hill. The place is fertile and charming, surrounded by beautiful rocks of a peculiar shape and of a deep subdued red. There are mineral waters, which made it popular in bygone days.

Lipari ends on the north side in an unusually white mountain, which might be mistaken for one of snow were it in a colder country. It is here that the world supplies itself with pumice stone.

I hired a boat with four oarsmen to go and see the island of the Volcano.

The reflection of the red rocks in the blue sea is a strange sight. A little strait is passed that divides the two islands. The crest of the island of the Volcano rises above the waves like a submerged crater.

It is a small uncultivated island, whose peak is thirteen hundred feet high, and it has a surface of twenty square kilometers. We go round another islet, the Volcanello, which rose suddenly from the sea about the year 200 B.C. and is united to the larger island by a narrow strip of land, overflowed by the waves on stormy days.

Now we are in a deep bay facing the smoking crater. At its foot is a house occupied by an Englishman, who is sleeping, they say, otherwise I never

could climb this volcano, which is exploited by this manufacturer; but he is asleep, so I can cross a large kitchen garden, then vineyards belonging to him and again a forest of Spanish broom in flower. One would say it was an immense yellow desert, draped about the sharp cones, whose top is also of the same color, blinding under the glare of the sun. I ascend by a narrow path, steep and slippery, winding through cinders and lava. As in Switzerland we sometimes see a stream falling from the top of a mountain, so here we find a motionless cascade of sulphur that has poured through a fissure. It is like a stream of congealed light, flowing sunlight.

I finally reached the crest, where a broad level surrounds the crater. The earth quakes, and in front of me, from an opening the size of a man's head, issues with great force an immense jet of flame and steam, while from the edge of this hole pours the liquid sulphur, gilded by the fire. It forms into a yellow lake, which quickly hardens around this weird spring. Farther away other openings throw out white vapors, which rise heavily in the blue atmosphere.

I advance with a certain sensation of fear on the hot cinders and lava as far as the edge of the crater, and the most wonderful sight greets my eye.

Deep in this immense well, called the Fossa, which is sixteen hundred feet across and about six hundred feet deep, from a dozen giant fissures and round holes pour fire, smoke and sulphur with a noise like that of immense boilers. You can go down the sides of this abyss and walk along the edge of the volcano. Everything around, under my feet and above me, is yellow, blinding, maddening yellow. Everything is

yellow: the soil, the high walls and the sky itself. The yellow sun pours its brilliant light into this seething pool, the heat from which causes the sunlight to burn you painfully. And you see the yellow liquid boiling as it flows, and strange crystals forming, and weird and dazzling acid formations on the red edges of these furnaces.

The Englishman whom we left sleeping at the foot of the hill makes a business of gathering, storing and selling these acids and liquids—in fact, everything the crater throws up; for they say all this is worth money, a great deal of money, too.

I come back slowly, out of breath, panting, suffocated by the unendurable fumes of the volcano; and on climbing back to the summit I saw all the Lipari Islands scattered about on the waves. Far away rises Stromboli, while behind me gigantic Etna appears to look down on its children and grandchildren.

On my way back from on board the boat I had discovered an island behind Lipari. The boatman said it was Salina. That is the place where Malmsey wine is made.

I wanted to drink some of it. It is like a syrup of sulphur. It is the wine of volcanoes—thick, sweet, golden and so full of sulphur that the taste remains for hours afterward. It ought to be called the devil's drink.

The wretched ship that brought me takes me back. At first I look at Stromboli, a round, high mountain, whose summit smokes and whose base is in deep water. It is only a cone emerging from the water. Clinging to its sides I notice a few houses, which look like sea shells. Then my eyes turn toward Sicily, which we are approaching, and I cannot see

anything but Mount Etna, which seems to crush it down with its tremendous weight, rearing its snow-covered head above all the other mountains on the island. They look like dwarfs, those other large mountains below it, and Etna itself seems of low stature, such is its great massiveness. To realize thoroughly the size of this weighty giant, one must see it from far out at sea.

To the left are the hilly shores of Calabria and the Strait of Messina, which resembles the mouth of a gulf. We pass through it, and presently enter the harbor. The city is without great interest, and we leave the same day for Catania. We go to Taormina.

Should a person who had only a day to spend in Sicily ask me what to see, I should answer, Taormina.

It is only a landscape, but a landscape where you find everything that can possibly appeal to the eye, the mind and the imagination.

The village rests on a tall mountain, as if it had rolled down from the summit; but we do not stop there, although it contains some pretty relics of the past, but go to the Greek temple to see the sunset.

I have already said, speaking of the theatre of Ségasta, that the Greeks, incomparable decorators as they were, knew how to choose the one and only place where theatres, those houses built for the pleasures of our artistic senses, should be erected.

The one of Taormina is so marvellously situated that there cannot be another spot in the world that can compare with it. When one enters it, goes over the stage, the only one that has come down to us in a good state of preservation, one climbs the tumble-down and grass-grown tiers of seats that spectators

formerly occupied, where thirty-five thousand people could be seated, and gazes about in astonishment.

You first see the ruin, sad, magnificent, the beautiful white marble pillars with their capitals still standing. Then from the walls you see the sea beneath you stretching away as far as the eye can see, its coast, extending to the horizon, covered with immense rocks, bordered with golden sands and with white villages scattered along it. Then, to the right, towering above everything, filling half the sky with its bulk stands Etna, covered with snow and emitting smoke.

Where can you find the races who could accomplish such things at the present day? Where are the men who could erect, for the pleasure of the masses, edifices like this?

Now we resume our journey toward Catania, whence I wish to climb the volcano.

The monster is about thirty or forty kilometers distant. This makes us appreciate how enormous it must really be. From its huge, black, cavernous mouth it has thrown up, from time to time, a burning flow of bitumen, which, running down its gentle or rapid slopes, has filled valleys, buried villages, drowned men as a river would, and finally has ended at the sea, driving it back with great force. They have formed cliffs, mountains and ravines, these slow, yeasty, red waves; and as their color darkened when they hardened they have spread all around this immense volcano a curious black coating full of fissures and humps and windings and peculiar designs, caused by the vagaries of eruptions and the whimsical humor of the hot lava.

Sometimes Mount Etna remains undisturbed for

centuries at a time, only puffing into the sky its thick smoke. Then, under the action of the sun and rain, the old streams of lava are reduced to a sort of ashes, a sandy black soil in which olives, oranges, lemons, pomegranates and vines are grown for the market.

Nothing is so green, so pretty or even so charming as Aci-Reale, in the midst of a forest of orange and olive trees. But, every now and then, you find a large black stretch on which time has had no effect, which has retained all its fantastic forms, extraordinary shapes that look like animals with their limbs twisted, intertwined.

We reached Catania, a large and fine city built entirely on lava, and from the windows of the Grand Hotel we could see the summit of Mount Etna.

Thanks to the kindness of M. Ragusa, a member of the Alpine Club, we were enabled to make the ascent of the volcano with great facility, in spite of the fact that it is a fatiguing climb, although not dangerous.

A carriage drove us first to Nicolisi, through fields and gardens full of trees grown in the pulverized lava. Now and then our road crossed immense tracts of lava, and everywhere the soil was black.

After three hours' walk and easy uphill climbing, we reached the last village at the foot of Mount Etna, called Nicolisi, which is over two thousand two hundred feet high, though only fourteen kilometers from Catania.

We now left the carriage and resumed our journey with guides and mules. We wore woolen stockings and gloves.

All about us now were vines that had been planted in lava; some were young, others old. Then a plain of lava covered with flowering broom, a golden plain.

We then crossed the enormous lava stream of 1882 and were astonished at the sight of the immense river, so black and motionless, a bubbling, petrified stream, which poured down from the very top of the smoking crater, fully twenty kilometers away. It had followed valleys, rounded peaks and crossed plains, this river, and here it was now before us, checked in its progress, as its source of fire had become exhausted.

We kept on climbing, leaving on our right the Mounts Rossi, and were constantly discovering new mountains, which the guides called the sons of Mount Etna, and which have sprouted up near the monster, that wears, as it were, a necklace of volcanoes. They number as many as three hundred and fifty, these black offspring of this giant parent, and many of them are as high as Vesuvius.

We finally reached La Casa del Bosco, a kind of hut inhabited by five or six woodcutters. The guide declared it was impossible to go farther in the hurricane that was blowing and asked for a night's hospitality. The hut itself trembled under the blasts of the storm, and the wind blew furiously through the loose tiles of the roof.

Daylight came and the wind had died down. All about us now was a region of valleys with black soil which ascended gently toward the region of glittering snow at the foot of the last cone, nine hundred feet high.

Now we struck the first snow level. We avoided it by a turn in the road. But another followed it very soon, which we had to cross. The mules hesitated, tested the ground with their hoofs, advancing cautiously. All of a sudden I felt as if I were sinking

into the earth. The two front legs of my mount broke through the crust on which he was treading and were buried in the ground up to his breast. The unfortunate beast struggled affrighted, rising only to sink in deeper and fall in with all four feet through the snow crust.

The other mules were in the same position. We had to dismount, calm, help and even drag the poor beasts. Every minute they fell and plunged in this white and cold mass, in which even our feet sank at times up to our knees. Between these snow passes, which filled up the valleys, we found again great fields of lava, looking like stretches of black velvet, glittering in the sun with the same brilliancy as the snow. This was the deserted region, the dead region, which seemed in mourning, either all white or all black, blinding and horrible, though superb—a sight never to be forgotten.

After four hours' walking and toiling we reached the Casa Inglese, a small stone house surrounded with ice and almost buried in the snow at the foot of the last cone that rises behind it in a shroud of smoke.

It took us about an hour to climb the nine hundred feet which separated us from the crater. For some time sulphurous and suffocating vapors had been floating about. We had noticed to the right, and again to the left, huge jets of steam bursting from crevices in the soil, and our hands had felt the scorching heat of large stones. At last we reached a narrow platform. Before us a dense cloud rose slowly, like a white curtain coming out of the earth. We advanced with covered nostrils and mouth, so as not to be suffocated by the sulphur fumes, and

suddenly at our feet opened an enormous and fearful abyss, about three miles in circumference. Through the stifling vapor you can hardly distinguish the other side of this huge hole, five thousand feet across, whose perpendicular sides go down to the mysterious and terrible land of fire.

Everything around us was even more strange. Sicily was hidden under mists that ended at the edge of the coast, concealing only the land, so that we seemed to be up in the heavens, as it were, in the midst of seas, above the clouds, so very high that the Mediterranean spread out on all sides as far as the eye could reach, looked like part of the very sky itself. The azure enwrapped us on all sides. We were standing on an extraordinary mountain, rising out of the clouds and bathed in the sky, which stretched above our heads, beneath our feet, everywhere.

But by degrees the mists over the island rose about us, encircling very soon the immense volcano with an abyss of clouds. It was now our turn to be at the bottom of a perfectly white crater, from the depths of which we could see only the blue sky, far above our heads.

But on other days the spectacle is entirely different.

We awaited the rising of the sun, which appeared from behind the hills of Calabria. These threw out their shadow on the sea, as far as the foot of Mount Etna, whose dark silhouette covered Sicily with its immense triangle, which disappeared as the sun ascended in the sky. There then came to light before us a panorama four hundred kilometers in diameter and one thousand three hundred in circumference,

with Italy at the north and the Lipari Islands, whose two volcanoes looked as if they were saluting their sire, while toward the south, barely visible, we saw Malta. In the harbors of Sicily the ships had the appearance of insects on the sea.

Alexandre Dumas *père* has given an excellent and very enthusiastic description of this spectacle.

After returning to Catania we left next day for Syracuse.

This is the city with which one ought to wind up an excursion in Sicily. It was as illustrious at one time as any of the larger towns; its tyrants rendered their reigns as celebrated as that of Nero; it produces a wine which poets have made famous. On the banks of the gulf on which it is situated there is a very small river, the Anapo, where grows the papyrus, the secret guardian of thought, and it holds within its walls one of the most beautiful Venuses in the world.

Some people cross continents to go on a pilgrimage to a miraculous shrine. As for me, I came here to pay my devotions to the Venus of Syracuse.

It was in the album of a traveller that I saw the picture of this sublime marble woman. It was she, probably, who induced me to take this trip. I dreamed of her, I spoke of her incessantly, long before seeing her.

I wandered through the town, which is built on an island and separated from the land by three walls, between which pass three arms of the sea. It is small, pretty, situated on the shores of the gulf, with gardens and walks that lead to the water.

Then we went to the Latomias, immense roofless excavations, which were originally stone quarries,

but became prisons, where, for eight months after the defeat of Nicias, the captured Athenians were confined, tortured by hunger, thirst and the horrible heat of these caldrons, swarming with vermin, where they lay dying.

In one of these, the Latomia of Paradise, we noticed, at the end of a grotto, a peculiar opening, called the ear of Dionysius, who it is said came to listen at the hole, to hear the groanings of his victims. There are other versions, too. Certain ingenious learned men assert that this grotto, when put in communication with the theatre, was used as a subterranean hall for performances, to which it lent an echo that was prodigiously sonorous, for the slightest noises are surprisingly magnified.

The most remarkable of the Latomias is assuredly that of the Capuchins, an immense deep garden divided by vaults, arches and enormous rocks and enclosed in white cliffs.

We visited the Catacombs, whose area is five hundred acres. It was here that M. Cavalari found the most beautiful of all known Christian sarcophagi. We then entered the modest hotel, which overlooks the sea, and sat up late, idly watching the red and green lights of the ships in the harbor.

On entering the museum I saw her (the Venus) at the other end of the hall, and she was just as beautiful as I had imagined her.

She has no head and one of her arms is missing, but never has the human form appeared to me more admirable and enticing.

It is not a poetical woman, an idealized woman, nor is it a divine or majestic woman, like the Venus de Milo, but it is a real woman, a woman such as

you love, such as you desire, a woman you would fain clasp in your arms.

She has a large frame, well-developed breasts, powerful hips, and rather heavy limbs; she is a carnal Venus, whom one pictures lying down as she stands erect before one's gaze. Her missing arm must have concealed her breasts; with the other one she is raising a drapery to cover up her mysterious charms, and does it with the most adorable grace. The whole attitude of the body is conceived and executed to show the grace of this movement; the lines all seem to concentrate here. This simple and natural gesture, full of modesty and of suggestiveness at the same time, both hiding and revealing, attracting and concealing, seems to define, in truth, the attitude of the feminine sex upon earth.

And the marble itself seems to live. One would like to touch it, so convinced one is that it would give under pressure like living flesh.

The hips, especially, are inexpressibly beautiful. The curve of the feminine back, which undulates from neck to heels, is admirably expressed, in the contour of the shoulders, in the decreasing roundness of the limbs, in the slight curve of the instep, all the modulations of human grace.

A work of art is superior only when it is, at one and the same time, a symbol and the exact expression of the real.

The Venus of Syracuse is a woman, and is also a symbol of fleshly lust.

Before the head of the Joconda one is beset by I know not what enervating and mystical temptation of love. There are also women living whose eyes give us that dream of unrealizable and mysterious

love. We seek to find in them something beyond what really exists, because they seem to embody something of the intangible ideal. We continue to pursue it, behind all the surprises of the beauty which seems to contain intelligence, in the depth of glances that are only shades of blue, in the charm of smiles that come from the curve of the lips and a flash of ivory, or in the grace of an attitude born of chance and of the harmony of the lines of the figure, but without ever attaining it.

In this way have poets forever been tortured by the thirst of a mysticai love. The natural exaltation of a poetic soul, aggravated by artistic enthusiasm, impels these chosen ones to conceive of a sort of vaporous love, frantically tender, ecstatic, never satiated, sensual without being carnal, so delicate that a breath will cause it to vanish, unrealizable and superhuman. And these poets are, perhaps, the only men who never have really loved a woman, a real woman of flesh and blood, with her womanly qualities and defects, her limited and charming mind, her feminine nerves, and her disquieting femininity.

Any creature that causes a dreamy exaltation on their part is to them the symbol of a mysterious but enchanted being: the being of whom they sing, true glorifiers of illusions that they are. This living being whom they worship is somewhat like a painted statue, the image of a god before whom people kneel. Where is this God? Who is this God? In what part of the heavens does this Unknown live, whom they have all worshipped, these unthinking ones, each and every one of them? As soon as they touch a hand responding to their pressure, their soul

takes flight in a visionary dream, far from the carnal reality.

The woman they clasp is transformed, perfected, or disfigured by their poetical art. It is not her lips they kiss, but the lips they have dreamed of. Their glance does not lose itself in the depths of her blue or black eyes, but in the great unattainable unknown, the goal of all their dreams. The eye of their mistress is only the window pane through which they attempt to catch a glimpse of the paradise of ideal love.

But if some bewitching women can give our souls this rare illusion, others again only excite in us the impetuous love by which the race is perpetuated.

The Venus of Syracuse is the perfect expression of this powerful, wholesome and simple beauty. This admirable torso, in Parian marble, is, we are told, the Venus Callipygus, described by Athenæus and Lampridedius, which was given by Heliogabalus to the people of Syracuse.

It has no head! What difference does it make? Its symbol is only the more complete. It is a woman's body that expresses all the real poetry of a caress.

Schopenhauer has said that nature, wishing to perpetuate the species, has made a snare of reproduction.

This marble figure, seen in Syracuse, is truly the human snare divined by the ancient artist, the woman who conceals and reveals the disquieting mystery of life.

Is it a snare? More's the pity! It attracts the lips, the touch of the hand, giving to kisses the pal-

pable reality of white and yielding flesh, so firm and rounded and delightful to clasp.

It is divine, not because it expresses a thought, but simply because it is beautiful.

And one recalls, also, on beholding her, the bronze ram of Syracuse, the most beautiful piece of statuary in the museum of Palermo, which seems to be the embodiment of the whole world's animality. The powerful beast is lying down, his legs bent under him, the head slightly turned to the left. You would take this animal's head for that of a god, a bestial god, carnal and superb. The forehead is broad with curly hair, the eyes are set wide apart, the nose is long, well rounded and thick, with short hair and a remarkably brutish expression. The horns, which turn backwards, are twisted and curved, with their sharp points standing out from the thin ears, which also somewhat resemble horns. And the animal's glance impresses you with its stupid, disquieting and hard look. We feel as if in the presence of a wild animal on approaching this bronze.

On leaving the museum I gave one more loving look toward the marble figure, a look such as we give the beloved one at parting, and I immediately embarked to go and pay my respects to the papyrus of the River Anapo, as all writers should do.

We crossed the gulf from one bank to the other, and on the flat and bare shore we saw the mouth of a tiny river, where the boat entered.

The current was strong and hard to pull against. Sometimes the men were obliged to row, and at others to use the boat hook, to make us glide over the water, which ran rapidly between banks covered

with small, bright, yellow flowers—two banks of gold.

Here were reeds, which rustled as we touched them, which bent and rose, and there, with their roots in water, were deep blue irises, on which fluttered innumerable dragonflies with glassy wings like mother of pearl, and quivering. Some of these flies were almost as large as humming-birds. And now, on the two banks that enclosed us, grew giant thistles and immense bindweed, weaving together the plants of the land and the reeds of the stream.

Beneath us, at the bottom of the water, was a forest of tall, waving grasses which moved about, floated, and looked as if they were swimming in the current that forever tossed them about.

Then the River Anapo separated from the ancient Cyaneus, its tributary, and we still punted along between the two banks. The stream wound in and out, amid blooming and enchanting perspectives. An island loomed up finally, covered with strange bushes. The frail and triangular stems, eight or nine feet high, bore at the top round tufts of green threads that were long, soft, flexible like human hair. They gave one the impression of human heads turned into plants, which might have been thrown into this sacred stream by one of the pagan deities who lived here in days gone by. And this was the ancient papyrus.

The peasants call this reed "parruca."

And in the distance you may see many more, a whole forest of them. They quiver, rustle, bend in every direction; their hairy heads become entangled, and they always look as if they were speaking about unknown and far-away things.

Is it not strange that this wonderful plant, which brought down to us the thoughts of the dead, which preserved for us the fruits of human genius, should bear on its slender body of a shrub an enormous mane of thick and flowing hair, such as is worn by the poets of to-day?

We returned to Syracuse as the sun was about to set, and we gazed at the steamer, just arrived, which was to carry us away that very night toward Africa.

ONE EVENING

THE steamboat *Kleber* had stopped, and I was enraptured with the beautiful Bay of Bougie, that spread out before us. The Kabyle Mountains were covered with forests, and in the distance the yellow sands formed a beach of powdered gold, while the sun shed its fiery rays on the white houses of the town.

The warm African breeze wafted the odor of the desert, the odor of that great, mysterious continent into which men of the northern races but rarely penetrate, into my face. For three months I had been wandering on the borders of that great, unknown world, on the outskirts of that strange world of the ostrich, the camel, the gazelle, the hippopotamus, the gorilla, the lion, the tiger, and the negro. I had seen the Arab galloping in the wind, like a waving standard, and I had slept under those brown tents, the moving habitation of those white birds of the desert, and I felt, as it were, intoxicated with light, with imagination, and with space.

But now, after this final excursion, I should have to leave, to return to France and to Paris, that city of useless chatter, of commonplace cares, and of continual handshaking, and I should bid adieu to all that I had grown to love, all that was so new to me, that I had scarcely had time to see thoroughly, and that I should so much regret.

A fleet of small boats surrounded the steamer, and, jumping into one rowed by a negro lad, I soon reached the quay near the old Saracen gate, whose gray ruins at the entrance of the Kabyle town looked like an old escutcheon of nobility. While I was standing by the side of my portmanteau, looking at the great steamer lying at anchor in the roads, and filled with admiration at that unique coast and that semicircle of hills washed by the blue waves, which were more beautiful than Naples and as fine as those of Ajaccio or of Porto, in Corsica, a heavy hand was laid on my shoulder, and on turning round I saw standing beside me a tall man with a long beard. He was dressed in white flannels and wore a straw hat, and was looking at me with his blue eyes.

"Are you not an old schoolmate of mine?" he said.

"It is very possible. What is your name?"

"Trémoulin."

"By Jove! You were in the same class as I was."

"Ah! Old fellow, I recognized you immediately."

He seemed so pleased, so happy at seeing me, that, in an outburst of friendly egotism, I shook both the hands of my former schoolfellow heartily, and felt very pleased at meeting him thus.

For four years Trémoulin had been one of my best and most intimate friends, one of those whom we are too apt to forget as soon as we leave college. In those days he had been a tall, thin fellow, whose head seemed too heavy for his body; it was a large, round head, and bent his neck sometimes to the right

and sometimes to the left, looking top-heavy for the narrow-chested, long-legged collegian. Trémoulin was very clever, however, with a rare suppleness and versatility of mind, and an instinctive intuition for all literary studies, and he won nearly all the prizes in our class.

We were fully convinced at school that he would turn out a celebrated man, a poet, no doubt, for he wrote verses, and was full of ingeniously sentimental ideas. His father, who kept a chemist's shop near the Pantheon, was not supposed to be very well off, and I had lost sight of him as soon as he had taken his Bachelor's degree, and now I naturally asked him what he was doing there.

"I am a planter," he replied.

"Bah! You really plant?"

"And I gather in my harvest."

"What is it?"

"Grapes, from which I make wine."

"Is your wine-growing a success?"

"A great success."

"So much the better, old fellow."

"Were you going to the hotel?"

"Of course I was."

"Well, then, you must just come home with me instead."

"But——"

"The matter is settled."

And he said to the young negro who was watching our movements: "Take that home, Ali."

The lad put my portmanteau on his shoulder and set off, raising the dust with his black feet, while Trémoulin took my arm and led me off. First of all, he asked me about my journey and what im-

pressions it had made on me, and, seeing how enthusiastic I was about it, he seemed to like me better than ever. He lived in an old Moorish house, with an interior courtyard, without any windows looking into the street, and commanded by a terrace, which, in its turn, commanded those of the neighboring houses, as well as the bay and the forests, the hill and the open sea, and I could not help exclaiming:

"Ah! This is what I like; the whole of the Orient lays hold of me in this place. You are indeed lucky to be living here! What nights you must spend upon that terrace! Do you sleep there?"

"Yes, in the summer. We will go up to it this evening. Are you fond of fishing?"

"What kind of fishing?"

"Fishing by torchlight."

"Yes, I am particularly fond of it."

"Very well, then, we will go after dinner, and then come back and drink sherbet on my roof."

After I had had a bath, he took me to see the charming Kabyle town, a veritable cascade of white houses toppling down to the sea, and as it grew dusk we went in, and after a delicious dinner, went down to the quay. Nothing was to be seen but the lights in the streets and the stars, those large, bright, scintillating African stars. A boat was waiting for us, and as soon as we got in, a man whose face I could not distinguish began to row, while my friend was getting ready the brazier which he would light later, and he said to me: "You know I am an expert in spearing fish; no one understands it better than I."

"Allow me to compliment you on your skill." We had rowed round a kind of mole, and now we were

in a small bay full of high rocks, whose shadows looked like towers built in the water, and I suddenly perceived that the sea was phosphorescent, and as the oars moved gently, they seemed to light up, a weird moving flame, that followed in our wake, and then died out. I leaned over the side of the boat and watched it, as we glided over that glimmer in the darkness.

Where were we going to? I could not see my neighbors; in fact, I could see nothing but the luminous ripple and the sparks of water dropping from the oars; it was hot, very hot, and the darkness seemed as hot as a furnace, and this mysterious voyage with these two men in that silent boat had a peculiar effect upon me.

Suddenly the rower stopped. Where were we? I heard a slight scratching sound close to me, and saw a hand, nothing but a hand, applying a lighted match to the iron grating fastened in the bows of the boat, which was covered with wood, as if it had been a floating funeral pyre, and which soon was blazing brightly and lighting up the boat and the two men, an old, thin, pale, wrinkled sailor, with a pocket-handkerchief tied round his head, instead of a cap, and Trémoulin, whose fair beard glistened in the light.

"Go on," he said, and the other began to row again, while Trémoulin kept throwing wood on the brazier, which burned red and brightly. I leaned over the side again and could see the bottom, and a few feet below us there was that strange country of the water, which gives life to plants and animals, just as the air of heaven does. Trémoulin, who was standing in the bows with his body bent forward,

and holding the sharp-pointed trident called a spearing hook in his hand, was on the lookout, with the ardent gaze of a beast of prey watching for its spoil, and, suddenly, with a swift movement, he darted his weapon into the sea so vigorously that it secured a large fish swimming near the bottom. It was a conger eel, which managed to wriggle, half dead as it was, into a puddle of the brackish water in the boat.

Trémoulin again threw his spear, and when he pulled it up, I saw a great lump of red flesh which palpitated, moved, rolled and unrolled long, strong, soft feelers round the handle of the trident. It was an octopus, and Trémoulin opened his knife, and with a swift movement plunged it between the eyes, and killed it. And so our fishing continued, until the wood began to run short. When there was not enough left to keep up the fire, Trémoulin dipped the braziers into the sea, and we were again buried in darkness.

The old sailor began to row again, slowly and regularly, though I could not tell where the land or where the port was. By and by, however, I saw lights. We were nearing the harbor.

"Are you sleepy?" my friend said to me.

"Not in the least."

"Then we will go and have a chat on the roof."

"I shall be delighted."

Just as we got on the terrace I saw the crescent moon rising behind the mountains, and around us, the white houses, with their flat roofs, descended toward the sea, while human forms were standing or lying on them, sleeping or dreaming under the stars; whole families wrapped in long flannel gar-

ments, and resting in the calm night, after the heat of the day.

It suddenly seemed to me as if the Eastern mind were taking possession of me, the poetical and legendary spirit of a simple people with poetical minds. My head was full of the Bible and of *The Arabian Nights;* I could hear the prophets proclaiming miracles and I could see the princesses in flowing silk bloomers on the terraces of the palaces, while delicate incense burned in silver dishes, the smoke as it arose taking the form of genii. I said to Trémoulin:

"You are very fortunate to live here."

"I came here quite by accident," he replied.

"By accident?"

"Yes, accident and unhappiness brought me here."

"You have been unhappy?"

"Very unhappy."

He was standing in front of me, wrapped in his burnous, and his voice had such a mournful ring that it almost made me shiver; after a moment's silence, however, he continued:

"I will tell you what my sorrow was; perhaps it will do me good to speak about it."

"Let me hear it."

"Do you really wish it?"

"Yes."

"Very well, then. You remember me at college, a sort of poet, brought up in a chemist's shop. I dreamed of writing books, and tried it, after taking my degree, but I did not succeed. I published a volume of verse, and then a novel, and neither of

them sold, and then I wrote a play, which was never acted.

"Next, I lost my heart, but I will not give you an account of my passion. Next door to my father's shop there was a tailor, who had a daughter, with whom I fell in love. She was very clever, and had obtained her diplomas for higher studies, and her mind was bright and active, quite in keeping indeed with her body. She might have been taken for fifteen, although she was two-and-twenty. She was very small, with delicate features, outlines and tints, just like some beautiful water color. Her nose, her mouth, her blue eyes, her light hair, her smile, her waist, her hands, all looked as if they were fit for a stained-glass window, and not for everyday life, but she was lively, supple, and incredibly active, and I was very much in love with her. I remember two or three walks in the Luxembourg Garden, near the Médici fountain, which were certainly the happiest hours of my life. I suppose you have known that strange condition of tender madness which causes us to think of nothing but of acts of adoration! One really becomes possessed, haunted by a woman, and nothing exists for us except herself.

"We soon became engaged, and I told her my projects for the future, of which she did not approve. She did not believe that I was either a poet, a novelist, or a dramatic author, and thought a prosperous business could afford perfect happiness. So I gave up the idea of writing books, and resigned myself to selling them, and I bought a bookseller's business at Marseilles, the owner of which had just died.

"I had three very prosperous years. We had made our shop into a sort of literary drawing-room, where all the men of letters in the town used to come and chat. They came in, as if it had been a club, and exchanged ideas on books, on poets, and especially on politics. My wife, who took a very active part in the business, enjoyed quite a reputation in the town, but, as for me, while they were all talking downstairs, I was working in my studio upstairs, which communicated with the shop by a winding staircase. I could hear their voices, their laughter, and their discussions, and sometimes I left off writing in order to listen. I kept in my own room to write a novel—which I never finished.

"The most regular frequenters of the shop were Monsieur Montina, a man of good private means, a tall, handsome man, such as one meets in the south of France, with an olive skin and dark, expressive eyes; Monsieur Barbet, a magistrate; two merchants, who were partners, Messrs. Faucil and Labarrègue, and General the Marquis de la Flèche, the head of the Royalist party, the principal man in the whole district, an old fellow of sixty-six.

"My business prospered, and I was happy, very happy. One day, however, about three o'clock, when I was out on business, as I was going through the Rue Saint-Ferréol, I suddenly saw coming out of a house a woman whose figure and appearance were so much like my wife's that I should have said to myself: 'It is she!' if I had not left her in the shop half an hour before, suffering from a headache. She was walking quickly on before me, without turning round, and, in spite of myself, I followed her, as I felt surprised and uneasy. I said to my-

self: 'It is she; no, it is quite impossible, as she has a sick headache. And then, what could she have to do in that house?' However, as I wished to have the matter cleared up, I hurried after her. I do not know whether she felt or guessed that I was behind her, or whether she recognized my step, but she turned round suddenly. It was she! When she saw me, she grew very red and stopped, and then, with a smile, she said: 'Oh! Here you are!' I felt choking.

"'Yes; so you have come out? And how is your headache?'

"'It is better, and I have been out on an errand.'

"'Where?'

"'To Lacaussade's, in the Rue Cassinelli, to order some pencils.'

"She looked me full in the face. She was not flushed now, but rather pale, on the contrary. Her clear, limpid eyes—ah! those women's eyes!—appeared to be full of truth, but I felt vaguely and painfully that they were full of lies. I was much more confused and embarrassed than she was herself, without venturing to suspect anything, but quite convinced that she was lying, though I did not know why, and so I merely said:

"'You were quite right to go out, if you felt better.'

"'Oh! yes; my head is much better.'

"'Are you going home?'

"'Yes, of course I am.'

"I left her, and wandered about the streets by myself. What was going on? While I was talking to her I had an intuitive feeling of her falseness, but now I could not believe it, and when I re-

turned home to dinner I was angry at having suspected her, even for a moment.

"Have you ever been jealous? It does not matter whether you have or not, but the first drop of jealousy had fallen into my heart, and that is always like a spark of fire. I did not formulate anything, and I did not believe anything, I only knew that she had lied. You must remember that every night, after the customers and clerks had left and we were alone, we would either stroll as far as the harbor when it was fine, or remain talking in my office, if the weather was bad; and I would open my heart to her without any reserve, because I loved her. She was part of my life, the greater part, and all my happiness, and in her small hands she held my trusting, faithful heart captive.

"During the first days, those days of doubt, and before my suspicions increased and assumed a shape, I felt as depressed and chilly as one does before becoming seriously ill. I was continually cold, really cold, and could neither eat nor sleep. Why had she told me a lie? What was she doing in that house? I went there, to try and find out something, but could discover nothing. The man who rented the first floor, and who was an upholsterer, had told me all about his neighbors, but without helping me the least. A midwife lived on the second floor, a dressmaker and a manicure and chiropodist on the third, and two coachmen and their families in the attics.

"Why had she told me a lie? It would have been so easy for her to have said that she had been to the dressmaker or the chiropodist. Oh, how I longed to question them also! I did not say so, for

fear that she might guess my suspicions. One thing, however, was certain: she had been into that house, and had concealed the fact from me, so there was some mystery in it. But what? At one moment I thought there might be some purpose in it, some charitable deed that she wished to hide, some information which she wished to obtain, and I found fault with myself for suspecting her. Have not all of us the right to our little innocent secrets, a kind of second, interior life, for which we are not responsible to anybody? Can a man, because he has taken a girl to be his companion through life, demand that she shall neither think nor do anything without telling him in advance, or afterward? Does the word marriage mean renouncing all liberty and independence? Was it not quite possible that she was going to the dressmaker's without telling me, or that she was going to aid the family of one of the coachmen? Or she might have thought that I would criticise her visit to the house without blaming her. She knew me thoroughly, all my slightest peculiarities, and perhaps she feared a discussion, even if she did not think that I should find fault with her. She had very pretty hands, and I ended by supposing that she was having them secretly attended to by the manicure in the house which I suspected, and that she did not tell me of it, for fear that I should think her extravagant. She was very methodical and economical, and looked after all her household duties most carefully, and no doubt she thought that she should lower herself in my eyes were she to confess that slight piece of feminine extravagance. Women have so many subtleties and innate tricks in their soul!

"But none of my reasoning reassured me. I was jealous; my suspicions were affecting me terribly; I was becoming a prey to them. I cherished secret grief and anguish; a thought as yet veiled, which I dared not uncover, for beneath it I should find a terrible doubt—— A lover! Had she not a lover? It was unlikely, impossible—and yet?

"I continually saw Montina's face before my eyes. I saw the tall, silly-looking, handsome man, with his bright hair, smiling into her face, and I said to myself: 'It is he.' I concocted a story of their intrigues. They had talked a book over together, had discussed the love adventures it contained, had found something in it that resembled them, and had turned that analogy into reality. And so I watched them, a prey to the most terrible sufferings that a man can endure. I bought shoes with rubber soles, so that I might be able to move about the house noiselessly, and I spent half my time in going up and down my little spiral staircase, in the hope of surprising them, but I always found that the clerk was with them.

"I lived in a state of continual suffering. I could no longer work nor attend to my business. When I went out, as soon as I had walked a hundred yards along the street, I said to myself: 'He is there!' When I found he was not there, I went out again, but returned almost immediately, thinking: 'He is there now!' and that went on every day.

"At night it was still worse, for I felt her by my side in bed asleep, or pretending to be asleep! Was she really sleeping? No, most likely not. Was that another lie?

"I remained motionless on my back, burning from the warmth of her body, tormented, breathing hard. Oh! how intensely I longed to get up, to get a hammer and split her head open, so as to look inside it! I knew that I should see nothing but what is to be found in every head, and I should have discovered nothing, for that would be impossible. And her eyes! When she looked at me, I felt an access of fury. I looked at her—she looked at me! Her eyes were transparent, candid—and false, false! No one could tell what she was thinking of, and I felt inclined to run pins into them, and to destroy those mirrors of falsity.

"Ah! how well I understood the Inquisition! I would have applied the torture, the boot. Speak! Confess! You will not? Then wait! And I would have strangled her by degrees to make her confess and have watched her die. Or else I would have held her fingers in the fire. Oh! how I should have enjoyed doing it! Confess! Confess! You will not? I would have held them on the coals, and when the tips were burned, she would have confessed—surely she would have confessed!"

Trémoulin was sitting up, shouting, with clenched fists. Around us, on the neighboring roofs, people awoke and sat up, aroused from their sleep. As for me, I was moved and powerfully interested, and in the darkness I could see that little woman, that little, fair, lively, artful woman, as if I had known her personally. I saw her selling her books, talking with the men whom her childish ways attracted, and in her delicate, doll-like head I could see little crafty ideas, silly ideas, the dreams of a milliner perfumed with musk, who is attracted by all heroes

or romantic adventurers. I suspected her just as he did, I hated and detested her, and would willingly have burned her fingers and make her confess.

Presently he continued more calmly: "I do not know why I have told you all this, for I have never mentioned it to any one, but then I have not seen anybody or spoken to anybody for two years! And it was seething in my heart like fermenting wine. I have rid myself of it, and so much the worse for you. Well, I had made a mistake, but it was worse than I thought, much worse. Just listen. I employed the means a man always employs under such circumstances, and pretended that I was going to be away from home. Whenever I did this my wife went out to luncheon. I need not tell you how I bribed a waiter in the restaurant to which they used to go, so that I might surprise them.

"He was to open the door of their private room for me, and I arrived at the appointed time, with the fixed determination of killing them both. I could imagine the whole scene, just as if it had already occurred! I could see myself going in. A small table covered with glasses, bottles and plates separated her from Montina, and they would be so surprised when they saw me that they would not even attempt to move; and, without a word, I should bring down the loaded stick which I had in my hand on the man's head. Killed by one blow, he would fall with his head face downward on the table. Then, turning toward her, I should give her time—a few moments—to understand it all and to stretch out her arms toward me, mad with terror, before dying in her turn. Oh! I was ready, strong, deter-

mined, and pleased, madly pleased at the idea. The idea of her terrified look at the sight of my raised stick, of her hands stretched out imploringly, of her strangled cry, of her face, suddenly livid and convulsed, avenged me beforehand. I would not kill her at one blow! You will think me cruel, I dare say; but you do not know what a man suffers. To think that a woman one loves, whether she be wife or sweetheart, gives herself to another, yields herself up to him as she does to you, and receives kisses from his lips as she does from yours! It is a terrible, an atrocious thing to think of. When one feels that torture, one is ready for anything. I only wonder that more women are not murdered, for every man who has been deceived longs to commit murder, has dreamed of it in the solitude of his own room or on a lonely road, and has been haunted by the one fixed idea of satisfied vengeance.

"I arrived at the restaurant, and asked whether they were there. The waiter whom I had bribed replied: 'Yes, monsieur,' and taking me upstairs, he pointed to a door, and said: 'That is the room!' I grasped my stick, as if my fingers had been made of iron, and went in. I had chosen a most appropriate moment, for they were kissing most lovingly. But it was not Montina, it was General de la Flèche, who was sixty-six years old, and I had so fully made up my mind that I should find the other one there that I was motionless from astonishment.

"And then—and then, I really do not quite know what was in my mind, no, I really do not know. If I had found myself face to face with the other, I should have been convulsed with rage; but on seeing this old man, with a prominent stomach and flabby

cheeks, I was nearly choked with disgust. She, who did not look fifteen, small and slim as she was, had given herself to this big man, who was almost paralyzed, because he was a marquis and a general, the friend and representative of dethroned kings. No, I do not know what I felt, nor what I thought. I could not have lifted my hand against this old man; it would have disgraced me! And I no longer felt inclined to kill my wife, but all women who could be guilty of such things! I was no longer jealous; I was dismayed, as if I had seen the horror of horrors!

"Let people say what they like of men, they are not so vile as that! If a man is known to have given himself up to an old woman in that fashion, people point their finger at him. The husband or lover of an old woman is more despised than a thief. We men are a decent lot, as a rule, but women, many women, are absolutely bad. They will give themselves to all men, old or young, from the most contemptible and different motives, because it is their profession, their vocation, and their function. They are the eternal, conscienceless and serene prostitutes, who give up their bodies, because they are the merchandise of love, which they sell, or give, to the old man who frequents the pavements with money in his pocket, or else for glory, to a lecherous old king, or to a celebrated and disgusting old man."

He cried aloud like a prophet of old, in a tone of wrath beneath the starry sky, and with the fury of a man in despair, he told of the glorified disgrace of all the mistresses of old kings, the respectable shame of all those virgins who marry old husbands,

the tolerated shame of all those young women who accept old men's kisses with a smile.

I could see them, as he evoked their memories, from the beginning of the world, surging round us in that Eastern night, girls, beautiful girls, with vile souls, who, like the lower animals who know nothing of the age of the male, are docile to senile desires. They rose up before me the handmaids of the patriarchs who are mentioned in the Bible, Hagar, Ruth, the daughters of Lot, Abigail, Abishag, the virgin of Shunam, who reanimated David with her caresses when he was dying, and the others, young, stout, white, patricians or plebeians, irresponsible females belonging to a master, and submissive slaves, whether caught by the attraction of royalty or bought as slaves!

"What did you do?" I asked.

"I went away," he replied simply. And we remained sitting side by side for a long time without speaking, only dreaming!

I have retained an impression of that evening that I can never forget. All that I saw, felt and heard, our fishing excursions, the octopus also, perhaps that harrowing story, amid those white figures on the neighboring roofs, all seemed to concur in producing a unique sensation. There is condensed in certain chance meetings, in certain inexplicable combinations of events—without its being evident on the surface—a greater amount of the secret quintessence of life than is spread over whole days of ordinary life.

MARROCA

YOU ask me, my friend, to give you my impressions of Africa, to tell you my adventures, and, especially, my love affairs in this country which has long had such an attraction for me. You were amused in anticipation at my dusky sweethearts, as you called them, and said you could see me returning to France followed by a tall ebony-colored female wearing a yellow silk bandanna round her head and voluminous, gaudy trousers.

No doubt the Moorish women will play a part, for I have seen several of them who have made me feel very much inclined to fall in love with them; but by way of a beginning, I came across something better, and very original.

In your last letter to me you say: "When I know how people love in a country I know that country well enough to describe it, although I may never have seen it." Let me tell you, then, that here they love furiously. From the very first moment one feels a sort of trembling ardor, of constant desire, to the very tips of the fingers, which overexcites our amorous feelings, and all our faculties of physical sensation, from the simple contact of the hands down, and makes us commit so many follies.

Do not misunderstand me. I do not know whether what you call love of the heart, love of the soul, whether sentimental idealism, Platonic love, in a

word, can exist on this earth; I doubt it myself. But that other love, sensual love, which has something good, a great deal of good about it, is really terrible in this climate. The heat, the burning atmosphere which makes you feverish, those suffocating blasts of wind from the south, those waves of fire which come from the desert which is so near us, that oppressive sirocco, which is more destructive and withering than fire, that perpetual conflagration of an entire continent, that is burned even to its stones by a fierce and devouring sun, these all inflame the blood, excite the flesh, and make brutes of us.

But to come to my story. I shall not tell you about the beginning of my stay in Africa. After going to Bona, Constantine, Biskara and Setif, I went to Bougie through the defiles of Chabet, by an excellent road through a large forest, which follows the sea at a height of six hundred feet above it, as far as that wonderful bay of Bougie, which is as beautiful as that of Naples, of Ajaccio, or of Douarnenez, which are the most lovely that I know.

Far away in the distance, before one enters the large inlet where the water is perfectly calm, one sees Bougie. It is built on the steep sides of a high hill covered with trees, and forms a white spot on that green slope; it might almost be taken for the foam of a cascade, falling into the sea.

I had no sooner set foot in that delightful small town than I knew that I should stay there a long time. In all directions the eye rests on rugged, strangely shaped hilltops, which are so close together that one can hardly see the open sea, so that the gulf looks like a lake. The blue water is wonderfully transparent, and the azure sky—a deep

azure, as if it had received two coats of paint—expands its wonderful beauty about it. They seem to be a reflection of each other, as in a mirror.

Bougie is a town of ruins, and on the quay, as one approaches, one sees such a magnificent ruin that it reminds one of a scene at the opera. It is the old Saracen Gate, overgrown with ivy, and there are ruins in all directions on the hills round the town, fragments of Roman walls, bits of Saracen monuments, the remains of Arab buildings.

I had taken a small Moorish house in the upper town. You know those dwellings which have been described so often. They have no windows in the outer wall; but they are lighted from top to bottom by an inner court. On the first floor there is a large, cool room, in which one passes the day, and a terrace on the roof, on which one spends the night.

I at once fell in with the custom of all hot countries, that is to say, of taking a siesta after lunch. That is the hottest time in Africa, the time when one can scarcely breathe; when the streets, the fields, and the long, dazzling white roads are deserted, when every one is asleep, or, at any rate, trying to sleep, attired as scantily as possible.

In my drawing-room, which had columns of Arab architecture, I had placed a large, soft couch, covered with a carpet from Djebel Amour, and lay down, very nearly in the costume of Assan, but I could not sleep. There are two forms of torture on the earth which I hope you will never know, the thirst for water and the longing for a woman's society, and I do not know which is the worst. In the desert men would commit any infamy for the sake of a glass of clean, cold water, and what would one

not give in some of the towns of the littoral to see a handsome, healthy girl! There is no lack of girls in Africa; on the contrary, they abound, but to continue my comparison, they are as unwholesome as the muddy water in the wells of Sahara.

Well, one day when I was feeling more enervated than usual, I was trying in vain to close my eyes. My legs twitched as if they were being pricked, and I tossed about uneasily on my couch, until at last, unable to bear it any longer, I got up and went out. It was a terribly hot day, in the middle of July, and the pavement was hot enough to bake bread on. My shirt, which was soaked with perspiration, clung to my body, and on the horizon there was a slight white vapor, which seemed to be palpable heat.

I went down to the beach and walked along the shore of the pretty bay where the baths are. There was nobody about, and nothing was stirring; not a sound of bird or of beast was to be heard, the very waves were silent, and the sea appeared to be asleep in the sun.

Suddenly, behind one of the rocks which were half covered by the silent water, I heard a slight movement, and on turning round, I saw a nude girl in the water, which covered her to the breast, taking a bath; no doubt she reckoned on being alone, at that hot period of the day. Her face was turned toward the sea, and she was moving gently up and down without perceiving me.

Nothing could have surprised me more than the sight of that beautiful woman in the water, which was as clear as crystal, under a blaze of sunlight. She was marvellously beautiful, tall, and modelled like a statue. She turned round, uttered a cry, and

half swimming, half walking, went and hid completely behind her rock; but as she must necessarily come out, I sat down on the beach and waited. Presently she just showed her head, which was covered with thick black braids. She had a rather large mouth, with full lips, large, bold eyes, and her skin, which was somewhat tanned by the climate, looked like a piece of old, hard, polished ivory.

She called out to me: "Go away!" and her full voice, which corresponded to her strong build, had a guttural accent. As I did not move, she added: "It is not right of you to stay there, monsieur." I did not move, however, and her head disappeared. Ten minutes passed, and then, first her hair, then her forehead, and then her eyes reappeared; but slowly and cautiously, as if she were playing at hide-and-seek and were looking to see who was near. This time she was furious, and called out: "You will cause me to get some illness, for I shall not come out as long as you are there." Thereupon, I got up and walked away, but not without looking round several times. When she thought I was far enough off, she came out of the water, bending down and turning her back to me, and disappeared in a cavity in the rock, behind a skirt that was hanging up in front of it.

I went back the next day. She was bathing again, but had on a bathing costume, and she began to laugh, and showed her white teeth. A week later we were friends, and in another week we were ardent friends. Her name was Marroca, and she pronounced it as if there were a dozen *r's* in it. She was the daughter of Spanish colonists, and had married a Frenchman, whose name was Pontabèze. He

was in government employ, though I never exactly knew what his position was. I found out that he was always very busy, and I did not care for anything else.

She then changed the time for taking her bath, and came to my house every day to have a siesta there. What a siesta! It could scarcely be called reposing! She was a splendid girl, of a somewhat animal, but superb type. Her eyes were always glowing with passion; her half-opened mouth, her sharp teeth, and even her smiles, had something ferociously loving about them; and her whole body had something of the animal and made her a sort of inferior and magnificent being, a creature who was destined for passionate love, and reminded me of those ancient deities who gave expression to their tenderness on the grass and under the trees.

And then her mind was as simple as two and two are four, and a sonorous laugh served her instead of thought.

Instinctively proud of her beauty, she did not hesitate to display it with daring and unconscious immodesty.

Sometimes she came in the evening, when her husband was on duty somewhere, and we would lie on the terrace. When the full moon lit up the town and the gulf, with its surrounding frame of hills, we saw lying on all the other terraces what looked like an army of silent phantoms, who would occasionally get up, change their places, and lie down again, in the languorous warmth of the starry sky.

One night, when I was sleeping under the starry sky, she came and knelt down on my carpet, and putting her lips, which curled slightly, close to my face,

she said: "You must come and stay at my house." I did not understand her, and asked: "What do you mean?" "Yes, when my husband has gone away, you must come and be with me."

I could not help laughing, and said: "Why, if you come here?" And she went on, almost talking into my mouth, "I want it as a remembrance." Still I did not grasp her meaning. She put her arms round my neck. "When you are no longer here I shall think of it."

I was touched and amused at the same time, and said: "You must be mad. I would much rather remain here. Is your husband very unkind to you?" I continued.

She looked vexed, and said: "Oh, no! He is very kind." "But you are not fond of him?" She looked at me with astonishment in her large eyes. "Indeed, I am very fond of him, very; but not so fond as I am of you."

I could not understand it at all, and while I was trying to get at her meaning, she pressed one of those kisses, whose power she knew so well, on my lips, and whispered: "But you will come, will you not?" I resisted, however, and so she got up immediately, and went away; nor did she come back for a week. On the eighth day she came back, stopped gravely at the door of my room, and said: "Are you coming to my house to-night? If you refuse, I shall go away." Eight days is a very long time, my friend, and in Africa those eight days are as good as a month. "Yes," I said, and opened my arms, and she threw herself into them.

At night she waited for me in a neighboring street, and took me to their house, which was very

small, and near the harbor. I first of all went through the kitchen, where they had their meals, and then into a very tidy whitewashed room, with photographs on walls and paper flowers under a glass case. Marroca seemed beside herself with pleasure, and she jumped about, and said: "There, you are at home now." And I certainly acted as though I had been, though I felt rather embarrassed and somewhat uneasy.

Suddenly a loud knocking at the door made us start, and a man's voice called out: "Marroca, it is I." She started. "My husband! Here, hide under the bed quickly." I looked distractedly for my overcoat, but she gave me a push, and gasped out: "Come along, come along."

I lay down flat on my stomach, and crept under the bed without a word, while she went into the kitchen. I heard her open a cupboard, and then shut it again, and she came back into the room, carrying some object which I could not see, but which she quickly put down; and as her husband was getting impatient, she said, calmly: "I cannot find the matches." Then suddenly she added: "Oh! Here they are; I will come and let you in."

The man came in, and I could see nothing of him but his feet, which were enormous. If the rest of him was in proportion, he must have been a giant.

I heard kisses, a little pat on her bare back, and a laugh, and he said, in strong Marseilles accent: "I forgot my purse, so I was obliged to come back; you were sound asleep, I suppose." He went to the cupboard, and was a long time in finding what he wanted; and as Marroca had thrown herself on the bed as if she were tired out, he went up to her, and

no doubt tried to caress her, for she flung a volley of angry *r's* at him. His feet were so close to me that I felt a stupid, inexplicable longing to catch hold of them, but I restrained myself, and when he saw that she would have nothing to say to him, he got angry, and said: "You are not at all kind to-night. Good-by." I heard another kiss, then the big feet turned, and I saw the nails in the soles of his shoes as he went into the next room. The front door closed, and I was saved!

I came slowly out of my retreat, feeling rather humiliated, and while Marroca danced a jig round me, shouting with laughter and clapping her hands, I threw myself heavily into a chair. But I jumped up with a bound, for I had sat down on something cold, and as I was not fully dressed, the contact made me start, and I looked round. I had sat down on a small axe, used for cutting wood, and as sharp as a knife. How had it got there? I had certainly not seen it when I went in; but Marroca, seeing me jump up, nearly choked with laughter, and coughed with both hands to her sides.

I thought her amusement rather out of place; we had risked our lives stupidly, and I still felt a cold shiver down my back, and I was rather hurt at her foolish laughter. "Suppose your husband had seen me?" I said. "There was no danger of that," she replied. "What do you mean—no danger? That is a good joke! If he had stooped down, he must have seen me."

She did not laugh any more, she only looked at me with her large eyes, which were bright with merriment. "He would not have stooped." "Why?" I persisted. "Just suppose that he had let his hat

fall, he would have been sure to pick it up, and then —I was well prepared to defend my position, in this costume!" She put her two strong, round arms about my neck, and, lowering her voice, as she did when she said "I *adorre* you," she whispered, "Then he would *neverr* have got up again." I did not understand her, and said: "What do you mean?"

She gave me a cunning wink, and put out her hand to the chair on which I had sat down, and her outstretched hands, her smile, her half-open lips, her white, sharp and ferocious teeth, all drew my attention to the little axe which was used for cutting wood, whose sharp blade was glistening in the candle-light, and while she put out her hand as if she were going to take it, she put her left arm around me, and drawing me to her, and putting her lips against mine, with her right arm she made a motion as if she were cutting off the head of a kneeling man!

This, my friend, is the manner in which people here understand conjugal duties, love, and hospitality!

FEAR

WE went on deck after dinner. The Mediterranean lay before us without a ripple and shimmering in the moonlight. The great ship glided on, casting upward to the star-studded sky a great serpent of black smoke. Behind us the dazzling white water, all white from the rapid course of the heavy boat, and lashed by the propeller, foamed and swirled and radiated light, so that it might have been compared to boiling, bubbling moonlight.

There were six or eight of us, silent with admiration, and gazing toward far-away Africa, whither we were going. The commandant, who was smoking a cigar with us, brusquely resumed the conversation begun at dinner.

"Yes, I was afraid then. My ship remained for six hours on that rock, beaten by the wind and with a great hole in the side. Fortunately, we were picked up toward evening by an English collier that sighted us."

Then a tall man, with sun-burned face and grave demeanor, one of those men who have evidently traveled in unknown and far-away lands, whose calm eye seems to preserve in its depths something of the foreign scenes it had observed, whose appearance shows great will and courage, spoke for the first time.

"You say, commandant, that you were afraid. I beg to disagree with you. You are in error as to the meaning of the word and the nature of the sensation you experienced. An energetic man never is afraid in the presence of great danger. He is excited, aroused, full of anxiety, but fear is something quite different."

The commandant laughed and answered: "Bah! I assure you that I was afraid."

Then the man of the tanned countenance addressed us deliberately, as follows:

"Permit me to explain. Fear—and the boldest men may feel fear—is something horrible, an atrocious sensation, a sort of disintegration of the soul, a terrible spasm of brain and heart, the very memory of which brings a shudder of anguish, but when one is brave he feels it neither under fire nor in the presence of sure death, nor in the face of any well-known danger. It springs up under certain abnormal conditions, under certain mysterious influences, in the presence of vague peril. Real fear is a sort of reminiscence of fantastic terrors of the past. A man who believes in ghosts and imagines he sees a spectre in the darkness must feel fear in all its horror.

"As for me, I was overwhelmed with fear in broad daylight about ten years ago, and again one December night last winter.

"Nevertheless, I have gone through many dangers, many adventures which seemed to promise death. I have often been in battle. I have been left for dead by thieves. In America I was condemned to be hanged as an insurgent, and off the coast of China thrown into the sea from the deck of a ship.

Each time I thought I was lost, and made up my mind to it at once without regret or weakness.

"But that is not fear.

"I have felt it in Africa, and yet it is a child of the north. The sunlight banished it like the mist. Consider this fact, gentlemen. Among the Orientals life has no value; resignation is natural. The nights are clear and are free from the sombre spirit of unrest that haunts the brain in cooler lands. In the Orient panic is known, but not fear.

"Well, then! Here is the incident that befell me in Africa:

"I was crossing the great sands of Ouargla. It is one of the most curious districts in the world. You have seen the unbroken, continuous sand of the endless shores of the ocean. Well, imagine the ocean itself turned to sand in the midst of a hurricane. Imagine a silent tempest with motionless billows of yellow dust. They are as high as mountains, these uneven, rolling waves, rising exactly like, but larger, and streaked like moiré silk. On this wild, silent and motionless sea the consuming rays of the tropical sun poured down pitilessly and directly. You have to climb these slopes of red-hot ash, descend again on the other side, climb again, climb, climb without halt, without repose, without shade. The horses cough, sink to their knees and slide down the sides of these remarkable hills.

"We were a couple of friends, followed by eight spahis and four camels with their drivers. We had ceased talking, overcome by heat, fatigue and as parched with thirst such as was this burning desert. Suddenly one of our men uttered a cry. We

all halted, surprised by an unsolved phenomenon known only to travelers in these trackless wastes.

"Somewhere, near us, in an indeterminable direction, a drum was beating, the mysterious drum of the desert. It was beating distinctly, now with greater resonance and again more faintly, ceasing, then resuming its uncanny roll.

"The Arabs, terrified, stared at one another, and one said in his own language: 'Death is upon us.' As he spoke, my companion, my friend, almost a brother, dropped from his horse, falling face downward on the sand, overcome by a sunstroke.

"And for two hours, while I tried in vain to save him, this weird drum filled my ears with its monotonous, intermittent and incomprehensible tattoo, and I felt fear lay hold of my bones—real fear, hideous fear, in the presence of this beloved corpse, in this hole scorched by the sun, surrounded by four mountains of sand and two hundred leagues from any French settlement, while echo assailed our ears with this furious drumbeat.

"On that day I realized what fear was, but since then I have had another and still more vivid experience."

The commandant interrupted the speaker:

"I beg your pardon, but what was the drum?"

"I cannot say," the traveller replied. "No one knows. Our officers are often surprised by this singular noise and attribute it generally to the echo produced by a hail of grains of sand blown by the wind against the dry and brittle leaves of weeds, for it has always been noticed that the phenomenon occurs in proximity to little plants burned by the sun and hard as parchment. This sound seems to

be magnified, multiplied and swelled beyond measure in its progress through the valleys of sand, and the drum therefore might be considered a sort of sound mirage. Nothing more. But I did not know that until later.

"I shall proceed to my second instance.

"It was last winter, in a forest of the northeast of France. The sky was so overcast that night came two hours earlier than usual. My guide was a peasant, who walked beside me along the narrow road, under the vault of fir trees, through which the wind howled in its fury. Between the tree tops I saw the fleeting clouds, which seemed to hasten as if to escape some object of terror. Sometimes in a fierce gust of wind the whole forest bowed in the same direction with a groan of pain, and a chill laid hold of me despite my rapid pace and heavy clothing.

"We were to sleep and take supper at an old gamekeeper's house not much farther on. I had come for the shooting.

"My guide sometimes raised his eyes and murmured: 'Ugly weather!' Then he told me about the people among whom we were to spend the night. The father had killed a poacher two years before, and since then had been gloomy and behaved as if haunted by a memory. His two married sons lived with him.

"The darkness was profound. I could see nothing before me or around me, and the mass of overhanging, interlacing trees rubbed together, filling the night with an incessant whispering. Finally I saw a light, and presently my companion knocked at a door. Sharp women's voices answered us, then a

man's voice, a choking voice, asked, 'Who goes there?' My guide gave his name. We entered and beheld a memorable picture.

"An old man with white hair, wild eyes and a loaded gun in his hands stood waiting for us in the middle of the kitcehen, while two strong youths, armed with axes, guarded the door. In the sombre corners I distinguished two women kneeling with faces to the wall.

"We explained matters, and the old man stood his gun against the wall, at the same time ordering that a room be prepared for me. Then, as the women did not stir: 'Look you, monsieur,' said he, 'two years ago this night I killed a man, and last year he came back to haunt me. I expect him again to-night.'

"Then he added in a tone that made me smile:

"'And so we are somewhat excited.'

"I reassured him as best I could, happy to have arrived on that particular evening, and to witness this superstitious terror. I told stories and almost succeeded in calming the whole household.

"Near the fireplace slept an old dog, with mustaches and almost blind, with his head between his paws, such a dog as reminds you of people you have known.

"Outside the raging storm was beating against the little house, and suddenly, through a small pane of glass, a sort of peep-hole placed near the door, I saw in a brilliant flash of lightning a mass of trees thrashed by the wind.

"In spite of my efforts, I realized that terror was laying hold of these people, and each time that I ceased to speak all ears listened for distant sounds.

Annoyed at these foolish fears, I was about to retire to my bed, when the old gamekeeper suddenly leaped from his chair, seized his gun and stammered wildly: 'There he is! there he is! I hear him!' The two women again sank upon their knees in the corner and hid their faces, while the sons took up their axes. I was going to try to pacify them once more, when the sleeping dog awakened suddenly, and, raising his head and stretching his neck, looked at the fire with his dim eyes, and uttered one of those mournful howls which make travellers shudder in the darkness and solitude of the country. All eyes were focused upon him now as he rose on his feet, as if haunted by a vision, and began to howl at something invisible, unknown and doubtless horrible, for he was bristling all over. The gamekeeper, with livid face, cried: 'He scents him! He scents him! He was there when I killed him.' The two women, terrified, began to wail in concert with the dog.

"In spite of myself cold chills ran down my spine. This vision of the animal at such a time and place, in the midst of these frightened people, was something frightful to witness.

"For an hour the dog howled without stirring; he howled as if in the anguish of a nightmare; and fear, horrible fear, came over me. Fear of what? How can I say? It was fear, and that is all I know.

"We remained motionless and pale, expecting something awful to happen. Our ears were strained and our hearts beat loudly, while the slightest noise startled us. Then the beast began to walk around the room, sniffing at the walls and growling con-

stantly. His manœuvres were driving us mad! Then the countryman who had brought me thither seized the dog in a paroxysm of rage, and carrying him to a door, which opened into a small court, thrust him forth.

"The noise was suppressed, and we were left plunged in a silence still more terrible. Then suddenly we all started. Some one was gliding along the outside wall toward the forest; then he seemed to be feeling the door with a trembling hand; then for two minutes nothing was heard and we almost lost our minds. Then he returned, still feeling along the wall and scratching lightly upon the door, as a child might do with his fingernails. Suddenly a face appeared behind the glass of the peephole, a white face with eyes shining like those of the cat tribe. A sound was heard, an indistinct, plaintive murmur.

"Then there was a formidable burst of noise in the kitchen. The old gamekeeper had fired, and the two sons at once rushed forward and barricaded the window with the great table, reënforcing it with the buffet.

"I swear to you that at the shock of the gun's discharge, which I did not expect, such an anguish laid hold of my heart, my soul and my very body that I felt myself about to fall, about to die from fear.

"We remained there until dawn, unable to move, in short, seized by an indescribable numbness of the brain.

"No one dared to remove the barricade until a thin ray of sunlight appeared through a crack in the back room.

"At the base of the wall and under the window we found the old dog lying dead, his skull shattered by a ball.

"He had escaped from the little court by digging a hole under a fence."

The dark-visaged man became silent, then he added:

"And yet on that night I incurred no danger, but I should rather again pass through all the hours in which I have confronted the most terrible perils than the one minute when that gun was discharged at the shaggy head in the window."

ALLOUMA

I

"IF you happen to be near Bordj-Ebbaba while you are in Algeria, be sure and go to see my old friend Auballe, who has settled there," said one of my friends.

I had forgotten the name of Auballe and of Ebbaba, and was not thinking of the settler, when I arrived at his house by pure accident. For a month I had been wandering on foot through that magnificent district which extends from Algiers to Cherchell, Orléansville and Tiaret. It is at the same time wooded and bare, grand and charming. Between two hills one comes across large pine forests, in narrow valleys, through which torrents rush in the winter. Enormous trees, which have fallen across the ravine, serve as a bridge for the Arabs and also for the tropical creepers, which twine round the dead stems and adorn them with new life. There are hollows in little-known recesses of the mountains, of an awe-inspiring beauty, and level banks of streams, which are covered with oleanders and are indescribably lovely.

But the most pleasant recollections of that excursion are the long after-dinner walks along the slightly wooded roads, on those coast hills from which one can see an immense tract of country from

the blue sea as far as the chain of the Ouarsenis, on whose summit is the cedar forest of Teniet-el-Haad.

On that day I lost my way. I had just climbed to the top of a hill, whence, beyond a long extent of rising ground, I could see the extensive plain of Metidja, and then, on the summit of another chain, almost invisible in the distance, that strange monument which is called *The Tomb of the Christian Woman,* which is said to be the burial-place of a royal family of Mauritania. I went down again, going southward, with a yellow landscape before me, extending as far as the fringe of the desert, as yellow as if all those hills were covered with lions' skins sewn together. Sometimes a pointed yellow peak would rise out of the midst of them, like the hairy back of a camel.

I walked quickly and lightly, as one does when following tortuous paths on a mountain slope. Nothing seems to weigh on one in those short, quick walks through the invigorating air of those heights, neither the body, nor the heart, nor the thoughts, nor even cares. On that day I felt nothing of all that crushes and tortures our life; I only felt the pleasure of that descent. In the distance I saw an Arab encampment, brown pointed tents, which seemed rooted to the earth as limpets are to a rock, or else *gourbis,* huts made of branches, from which rose a gray smoke. White figures, men and women, were walking slowly about, and the bells of the flocks sounded indistinctly through the evening air.

The arbutus trees on the road hung down under the weight of their purple fruit, which was falling on the ground. They looked like martyred trees, from which blood-colored sweat was falling, for at

the tip of every stem there was a red berry, like a drop of blood.

The earth all round them was covered with a rain of this fruit and as my feet crushed them, they left blood-colored tracks behind them. Sometimes, as I went along, I would jump and pick some berries and eat them.

All the valleys were by this time filled with a white vapor, which rose slowly, like steam from the flanks of an ox; and on the chain of mountains that bordered the horizon, on the outskirts of the desert of Sahara, the sky was in flames. Long streaks of gold alternated with streaks of blood—blood again! Blood and gold, the whole of human history—and sometimes between the two there was a small opening in the greenish azure, far away like a dream.

How far away I was from all those persons and things with which one occupies oneself on the boulevards, far from myself also, for I had become a kind of wandering being, without thought or consciousness, far from my road, of which I was not even thinking, for as night came on, I found that I had lost my way.

The shades of night were falling on the earth like a shower of blackness, and I saw nothing before me but the mountain in the far distance. Presently I distinguished some tents in the valley into which I descended, and tried to make the first Arab I met understand in which direction I wanted to go. I do not know whether he understood me, but he gave me a long answer, which I did not in the least understand. In despair I was about to make up my mind to pass the night wrapped up in a rug near the en-

campment, when among the strange words that he uttered, I fancied that I heard the name *Bordj-Ebbaba,* and so I repeated:

"Bordj-Ebbaba."

"Yes, yes."

I showed him two francs that were a fortune to him and he started off while I followed him. Ah! I followed that pale phantom which strode on before me barefooted, along stony paths on which I stumbled continually, for a long time, and then suddenly I saw a light, and we presently reached the door of a white house, a kind of fortress with plain walls without any outside windows. When I knocked, dogs began to bark inside, and a voice asked in French:

"Who is there?"

"Does Monsieur Auballe live here?" I asked.

"Yes."

The door was opened for me, and I found myself face to face with Monsieur Auballe himself, a tall man in slippers, with a pipe in his mouth and the appearance of a jolly Hercules.

As soon as I mentioned my name, he put out both his hands and said:

"Consider yourself at home here, monsieur."

A quarter of an hour later I was dining ravenously opposite to my host, who went on smoking.

I knew his history. After having wasted a great amount of money on women, he had invested the remnants of his fortune in Algerian landed property and taken to money-making. It turned out prosperously; he was happy and had the calm look of a happy and contented man. I could not understand how this fast Parisian could have grown accustomed

to that horrible life in such a lonely spot, and I asked him about it.

"How long have you been here?" I asked him.

"For nine years."

"And have you not been intolerably dull and miserable?"

"No, one gets used to this country, and ends by liking it. You cannot imagine what a hold it has on people through those small animal instincts that we are unaware of ourselves. We first become attached to it through our external senses, to which it affords secret gratifications which we do not inquire into. The air and the climate overcome our flesh, in spite of ourselves, and the bright light with which it is inundated keeps the mind clear and fresh at but little cost. It penetrates our being continually through our eyes, and one might really say that it purifies the sombre nooks of the soul."

"But what about women?"

"Ah! There is rather a dearth of them!"

"Only *rather?*"

"Well, yes—rather. For one can always, even among the Arabs, find some complaisant native women, who think of the nights of Roumi."

He turned to the Arab, who was waiting on me, a tall, dark fellow, with bright black eyes, that flashed beneath his turban, and said to him:

"I will call you when I want you, Mohammed." And then turning to me, he said:

"He understands French, and I am going to tell you a story in which he plays a leading part."

As soon as the man had left the room, he began:

"I had been here about four years, and hardly

felt quite settled yet in this country, whose language I was beginning to speak.

"I had bought this farm, this *bordj*, which had been a military post, and was within a few hundred yards from the native encampment, the men of which I employ to cultivate my land. From among the tribe that had settled here, and which formed a portion of the Oulad-Taadja, I chose, as soon as I arrived here, that tall fellow whom you have just seen, Mohammed ben Lam'har, who soon became greatly attached to me. As he would not sleep in a house, not being accustomed to it, he pitched his tent a few yards from my house, so that I might be able to call him from my window.

"You can guess what my life was, I dare say. Every day I was busy with clearing and planting. I hunted a little. I used to go and dine with the officers of the neighboring fortified post or else they came and dined with me. As for pleasures, I have told you what they consisted in. Algiers offered me some which were rather more refined, and from time to time a complaisant and compassionate Arab would stop me when I was out for a walk and offer to bring one of the women of his tribe to my house at night. Sometimes I accepted, but more frequently I refused, for fear of the disagreeable consequences and the trouble it might entail upon me.

"One evening at the beginning of summer I was going home, after going over the farm, and as I wanted Mohammed, I went into his tent without calling him, as I frequently did, and there I saw a woman, a girl, sleeping almost nude, with her arms crossed under her head, on one of those thick red carpets, made of the fine wool of Djebel-Amour, and

which are as soft and as thick as a feather bed. Her body, which was beautifully white under the ray of light that came in through the raised covering of the tent, appeared to me to be one of the most perfect specimens of the human race that I had ever seen, and most of the women about here are beautiful and tall, and are a rare combination of features and form. I let the flap of the tent fall in some confusion and returned home.

"The sudden flash of this vision had penetrated and scorched me and caused the blood to run through my veins with all the old ardor. It was a very hot July evening, and I spent nearly the whole night at my window, with my eyes fixed on the black Mohammed's tent.

"When he came into my room the next morning, I looked him closely in the face, and he hung his head like a man who was guilty and confused. Did he guess that I knew? I asked him suddenly:

" 'So you are married, Mohammed?' and I saw that he got red and he stammered out: 'No, *moussié!*'

"I used to make him speak French to me and give me Arabic lessons, which was often productive of a most incoherent mixture of languages. However, I went on:

" 'Then why is there a woman in your tent?'

" 'She comes from the South,' he said in a low, apologetic voice.

" 'Oh! So she comes from the South? But that does not explain to me how she comes to be in your tent.'

"Without answering my question, he continued:

" 'She is very pretty.'

"'Oh! Indeed. Another time, please, when you happen to receive a pretty woman from the South, you will take care that she comes to my *gourbi,* and not to yours. You understand me, Mohammed?'

"'Yes, *moussié,*' he repeated, seriously.

"I must acknowledge that during the whole day I was in a state of aggressive excitement at the recollection of that Arab girl lying on the red carpet, and when I went in at dinner time, I felt very strongly inclined to go to Mohammed's tent again. During the evening he waited on me just as usual and hovered round me with his impassive face, and several times I came very near asking him whether he intended to keep that girl from the South, who was very pretty, in his camel skin tent for any length of time.

"Toward nine o'clock, still troubled with that longing for female society which is as tenacious as the hunting instinct in dogs, I went out to get some fresh air and to stroll about a little round that cone of brown canvas through which I could see a brilliant speck of light. I did not remain long, however, for fear of being surprised by Mohammed in the neighborhood of his dwelling. When I went in an hour later, I clearly saw his outline in the tent, and then, taking the key out of my pocket, I went into the *bordj,* where besides myself, there slept my steward, two French laborers and an old cook whom I had picked up in Algiers. As I went upstairs I was surprised to see a streak of light under my door, and when I opened it, I saw a girl with the face of a statue sitting on a straw chair by the side of the table, on which a wax candle was burning; she was bedizened with all those silver ornaments which

women in the South wear on their legs, arms, breast, and even on their abdomen. Her eyes, which were tinged with kohl, to make them look larger, regarded me earnestly, and four little blue spots, finely tattooed on her skin, marked her forehead, her cheeks and her chin. Her arms, which were loaded with bracelets, were resting on her thighs, which were covered by the long red silk *gebba,* or covering, that fell from her shoulders.

"When she saw me come in, she rose and remained standing in front of me, covered with her barbaric jewels, in an attitude of proud submission.

" 'What are you doing here?' I said to her in Arabic.

" 'I am here because Mohammed told me to come.'

" 'Very well; sit down.'

"So she sat down and lowered her eyes while I examined her attentively.

"She had a strange, regular, delicate and rather animal face, but mysterious as that of a Buddha. Her lips, which were rather thick and with a sort of red bloom, which I discovered on other portions of her body as well, indicated a slight admixture of negro blood, although her hands and arms were of an irreproachable whiteness.

"I hesitated as to what to do with her, and felt excited, tempted and rather embarrassed; so, in order to gain time and to give myself an opportunity for reflection, I put other questions to her: about her birth, how she came into this part of the country, and what her connection with Mohammed was. But she only replied to those that interested me the least, and it was impossible for me to find out why she had come, with what intention, by whose orders,

nor what had taken place between her and my servant. However, just as I was about to say to her, 'Go back to Mohammed's tent,' she seemed to guess my intention, for getting up suddenly, and raising her two bare arms, on which the jingling bracelets slipped down to her shoulders, she clasped her hands behind my neck and drew me toward her with an irresistible air of suppliant longing.

"Her eyes, which were bright from emotion, from that necessity of conquering man, which imparts to the looks of an impure woman the same fascination as that exercised by the eyes of the feline tribe, allured me, enchanted me, deprived me of all power of resistance and filled me with impetuous ardor. It was a short, sharp struggle of the eyes only, that eternal struggle between those two human brutes, the male and the female, in which the male is always vanquished.

"Her hands, which were clasped behind my head, drew me irresistibly, with a gentle, increasing pressure, as if by mechanical force, toward her red lips, on which I suddenly pressed mine, while at the same moment I clasped her body that was covered with jingling silver rings in an ardent embrace.

"She was as nervous, supple, healthy as a wild animal, with all the motions, the ways, the grace and even something of the odor of a gazelle, which made me find a rare, unknown zest in her kisses, which was as strange to my senses as the taste of tropical fruit.

"Presently—I say presently, although it may have been toward morning—I wished to send her away, as I thought that she would go in the same way that she had come. I did not even at the moment ask

myself what I should do with her, or what she would do with me, but as soon as she guessed my intention, she whispered:

"'If you put me out, where shall I go now? I shall have to sleep on the ground in the open air at night. Let me sleep on the carpet at the foot of your bed.'

"What answer could I give her, or what could I do? I thought that no doubt Mohammed also would be watching the window of my room, in which a light was burning, and questions of various natures, that I had not put to myself during the first minutes, formulated themselves clearly in my brain.

"'Stay here,' I replied, 'and we will talk.'

"My resolution was taken in a moment. As this girl had been thrown into my arms in this manner I would keep her; I would make her a kind of slave-wife, hidden in my house, as women are in a harem. When the time should come that I no longer cared for her, it would be easy for me to get rid of her in some way or other, for on African soil that sort of creature almost belongs to us, body and soul; and so I said to her:

"'I wish to be kind to you, and I will treat you so that you shall not be unhappy, but I want to know who you are and where you come from.'

"She saw clearly that she must say something, and she told me her story, or rather a story, for no doubt she was lying, from beginning to end, as all Arabs always do, with or without any motive.

"That is one of the most surprising and incomprehensible signs of the native character—the Arabs always lie. Those people in whom Islam has become so incarnate that it has become part of them-

selves, to such an extent as to model their instincts and modify the entire race, and to differentiate it from others in morals just as much as the color of the skin distinguishes a negro from a white man, are liars to the backbone, so that one can never trust a word that they say. I do not know whether they owe that to their religion, but one must have lived among them in order to know the extent to which lying forms part of their being, of their heart and soul, until it has become a kind of second nature, a very necessity of life, with them.

"Well, she told me that she was the daughter of a *Caidi* of the *Ouled Sidi Cheik* and of a woman whom he had carried off in a raid against the Touaregs. The woman must have been a black slave, or, at any rate, have sprung from a first cross of Arab and negro blood. Nothing of such an origin was to be noticed, however, except the crimson color of her lips and the dark nipples of her elongated breasts. Nobody who knew anything about the matter could be mistaken in that. But all the rest of her belonged to the beautiful race from the South, white-skinned, supple, with a delicate face which was formed on straight and simple lines like those of a Hindu image. Her eyes, which were very far apart, still farther heightened the somewhat god-like looks of this desert marauder.

"I knew nothing exact about her real life. She related it to me in incoherent fragments, that seemed to rise up at random from a disordered memory, and she mixed up deliciously childish observations with them; a whole vision of a nomad world, born of a squirrel's brain that had leaped from tent to tent, from encampment to encampment, from tribe to

tribe. And all this was told with the serious look that this reserved people always maintain, with the appearance and rather comic gravity of a brass idol.

"When she had finished, I perceived that I had not remembered anything of that long story, full of insignificant events, that she had stored up in her flighty brain, and I asked myself whether she had not simply been making fun of me by her empty and would-be serious chatter, which told me nothing about herself nor about any real facts connected with her life.

"And I thought of that conquered race, amid whom we have encamped, or, rather, who are encamping in our midst; whose language we are beginning to speak; whom we see every day, living under the transparent canvas of their tents, on whom we have imposed our laws, our regulations, and our customs; and about whom we know nothing, nothing I assure you, any more than if we were not here, and had not been occupied solely in looking at them, for nearly sixty years. We know no more about what is going on in those huts made of branches, and under those small canvas cones fastened to the ground by stakes, which are within twenty yards of our doors, than we know what the so-called civilized Arabs of the Moorish houses in Algiers do, think and are. Behind the whitewashed walls of their town houses, behind the partition of their *gourbi,* which is made of branches, or behind that thin, brown curtain of camel's hair, which the wind moves, they live close to us, unknown, mysterious, liars, cunning, submissive, smiling, impenetrable. What if I were to tell you, that when I look at the neighboring encampment through my field-glasses,

I can guess at superstitions, customs, ceremonies, a thousand practices of which we know nothing, and which we do not even suspect! Never previously, in all probability, did a conquered race know so well how to escape so completely from the real domination, the moral influence and the unceasing, but useless, investigations of its conquerors.

"Now, I suddenly felt the insurmountable secret barrier which incomprehensible nature had set up between the two races more than I had ever felt it before, between this Arab girl and myslf, between this woman who had just given herself to me, who had yielded herself to my caresses; and, thinking of it for the first time, I said to her: 'What is your name?'

"She did not speak for some moments, and I saw her start, as if she had forgotten that I was there, and then, in her eyes that were raised to mine, I saw that that moment had sufficed for her to be overcome by sleep, irresistible, sudden, almost overwhelming, like everything that lays hold of the mobile senses of women, and she answered, carelessly, suppressing a yawn:

" 'Allouma.'

" 'Are you sleepy?'

" 'Yes,' she replied.

" 'Very well then, go to sleep!'

"She stretched herself out tranquilly by my side, lying on her stomach, with her forehead resting on her folded arms, and I felt almost immediately that her fleeting, untutored thoughts were lulled in repose, while I began to ponder, and tried to understand it all. Why had Mohammed given her to me? Had he acted the part of a magnanimous servant,

who sacrifices himself for his master, even to the extent of giving up to him the woman whom he had brought into his own tent? Or had he, on the other hand, obeyed a more complex and more practical, though less generous impulse, in handing over to me this girl who had taken my fancy? An Arab, when it is a question of women, is rigorously modest and unspeakably complaisant, and one can no more understand his rigorous and easy morality than one can all the rest of his sentiments. Perhaps, when I accidentally went into his tent, I had merely forestalled the benevolent intentions of this thoughtful servant, who had intended this woman, his friend and accomplice, or perhaps even his sweetheart, for me.

"All these suppositions assailed me, and fatigued me so much, that, at last, in my turn, I fell into a profound sleep, from which I was roused by the creaking of my door, and Mohammed came in to call me as usual. He opened the window, through which a flood of light streamed in, and fell over Allouma, who was still asleep; then he picked up my trousers, coat and waistcoat from the floor, in order to brush them. He did not look at the woman who was lying by my side, did not seem to know or to remark that she was there, and preserved his ordinary gravity, demeanor and looks. But the light, the movement, the slight noise which his bare feet made, the feeling of the fresh air on her skin and in her lungs, roused Allouma from her lethargy. She stretched out her arms, turned over, opened her eyes, and looked at me and then at Mohammed with the same indifference; then she sat up in bed and said: 'I am hungry.'

"'What would you like?'

"'Kahoua.'

"'Coffee and bread and butter?'

"'Yes.'

"Mohammed remained standing close to the couch, with my clothes under his arm, waiting for my orders.

"'Bring breakfast for Allouma and me,' I said to him.

"He went out, without his face betraying the slightest astonishment or anger, and as soon as he had left the room, I said to the girl:

"'Will you live in my house?'

"'I should like to, very much.'

"'I will give you a room to yourself, and a woman to wait on you.'

"'You are very generous, and I am grateful to you.'

"'But if you behave badly, I shall send you away immediately.'

"'I will do everything that you wish me to.'

"She took my hand and kissed it as a token of submission, and just then Mohammed came in, carrying a tray with our breakfast on it, and I said to him:

"'Allouma is going to live here. You must spread a carpet on the floor of the room at the end of the passage, and get Abd-El-Kader-El-Hadara's wife to come and wait on her.'

"'Yes, *moussié*.'

"That was all.

"An hour later my beautiful Arab was installed in a large airy, light room, and when I went in to make sure that everything was well, she asked me in a beseeching tone of voice to make her a present of a

wardrobe with a mirror. I promised it to her; then I left her crouching on the carpet of *Djebel-Amour,* a cigarette in her mouth, and chatting away with the old Arabian woman for whom I had sent, as though they had known each other for years.

II

"For a month I was very happy with her and I became strangely attached to this creature of another race, who seemed to me to be almost an entirely different being, born on a neighboring planet.

"I cannot say that I loved her—no—one does not love the girls of this primitive continent. Between them and us, even between them and their natural males, the Arabs, the little blue flower of northern climes never blooms. They are too much like human animals, their hearts are too rudimentary, their feelings are not refined enough to awaken in us that sentimental exaltation which is the poetry of love. Nothing intellectual, no intoxication of thought or feeling is mingled with that intoxication of the senses which those charming, vacant beings excite in us. Nevertheless they capitivate us as others do, but in a different fashion, which is less tenacious, and, at the same time, less cruel and painful.

"I cannot even now explain precisely what I felt for her. I said to you just now that this country, this Africa, devoid of art, devoid of all intellectual pleasures, gradually captivates us through its climate, through the continual mildness of the dawn and sunset, its delightful light, and the feeling of well-being with which it fills all our senses. Well,

then! Allouma captivated me in the same manner by a thousand hidden, physical, alluring charms.

"I left her absolutely free to come and go as she liked, and she certainy spent one afternoon out of two with the wives of my native agricultural laborers. Often also she would remain for nearly a whole day admiring herself in front of a mahogany wardrobe with a large mirror in the door that I had sent for from Miliana.

"She admired herself conscientiously, standing befor the glass door in which she followed her own movements with profound and serious attention. She walked with her head somewhat thrown back, in order to be able to see whether her hips and back swayed properly; went away, came back again, and then, tired with her own movements, she sat down on a cushion opposite her own reflection, and remained with her eyes gazing seriously into the eyes in the mirror, her whole soul absorbed in that picture.

"Soon I began to notice that she went out nearly every morning after breakfast, and that she disappeared altogether until evening, and as I felt rather anxious about this, I asked Mohammed whether he knew what she could be doing during all those long hours of absence, but he replied very calmly:

"'Do not be uneasy. It will be the Feast of Ramadan soon and she goes to say her prayers.'

"He also seemed delighted at having Allouma in the house, but I never once saw anything between them to arouse suspicion, and so I accepted the situation as it was, and let time, accident and life act for themselves.

"Often, after I had inspected my farm, my vine-

yards and my clearings, I would take long walks. You know the magnificent forests in this part of Algeria, those almost impenetrable ravines, where fallen pine trees stem the mountain torrents, and those little valleys filled with oleanders, which look like oriental carpets stretching along the banks of the streams. You know that at every moment, in these woods and on these hills, which one would think that no one had ever penetrated, one suddenly sees the white dome of a shrine that contains the bones of a humble, solitary marabout, which is rarely visited, from time to time, by a few confirmed believers, who come from the neighboring villages with a wax candle in their pocket, to set up before the tomb of the saint.

"Now, one evening as I was going home, I was passing one of these Mohammedan shrines, and looking in through the door, which was always open, I saw a woman praying before the altar—an Arab woman, sitting on the ground in that dilapidated building, into which the wind entered as it pleased and heaped up the fine, dry pine needles in yellow heaps in the corners. I went near to see better, and recognized Allouma. She neither saw nor heard me, so absorbed was she with the saint, to whom she was speaking in a low voice, as though she thought that she was alone with him, and was telling this servant of God all her troubles. Sometimes she stopped for a short time to think, to try and recollect what more she had to say, so that she might not forget anything that she wished to confide to him; then again she would grow animated, as if he had replied to her, as if he had advised her to do something that she did not want to do, and the reasons for which she was im-

pugning, and I went away as I had come, without making any noise, and returned home to dinner.

"That evening, when I sent for her, I saw that she had a thoughtful look, which was not usual with her.

" 'Sit down there,' I said, pointing to her place on the couch by my side. As soon as she had sat down, I stooped to kiss her, but she drew her head away quickly, and, in great astonishment, I said to her:

" 'Well, what is the matter?'

" 'It is the Ramadan,' she said.

" 'I began to laugh and said: 'And the Marabout has forbidden you to allow yourself to be kissed during the Ramadan?'

" 'Oh, yes; I am an Arab woman, and you are a Roumi!'

" 'And it would be a great sin?'

" 'Oh, yes!'

" 'So you ate nothing all day, until sunset?'

" 'No, nothing.'

" 'But you had something to eat after sundown?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Well, then, as it is quite dark now, you ought not to be more strict about the rest than you are about your mouth.'

"She seemed irritated, wounded, and offended, and replied with an amount of pride that I had never noticed in her before:

" 'If an Arab girl were to allow herself to be touched by a Roumi during the Ramadan, she would be cursed forever.'

" 'And that is to continue for a whole month?'

"'Yes, for the whole of the month of Ramadan,' she replied, with great determination.

"I assumed an irritated manner and said: 'Very well, then, you can go and spend the Ramadan with your family.'

"She seized my hands, and laying them on my heart, she said:

"'Oh, please do not be unkind, and you shall see how good I will be. We will keep Ramadan together, if you like. I will look after you and humor you, but don't be unkind.'

"I could not help smiling at her strange manner and her anxiety, and I sent her to sleep at home; but, an hour later, just as I was thinking about going to bed, there came two little taps at my door, which were so slight, however, that I scarcely heard them; but when I said, 'Come in,' Allouma appeared, carrying a large tray covered with Arab dainties, rice croquettes sauté and covered with sugar, and a variety of other strange Arab delicacies.

"She laughed, showing her white teeth, and said: 'Come, we will keep Ramadan together.'

"You know that the fast, which begins at dawn and ends at twilight, at the moment when the eye can no longer distinguish a black from a white thread, is followed every evening by small friendly entertainments, at which eating is kept up until the morning, and the result is that for such of the natives as are not very scrupulous, Ramadan consists of turning day into night and night into day. But Allouma carried her delicacy of conscience further than this. She placed her tray between us on the divan, and taking a small sugared ball between

her long, slender fingers, she put it into my mouth and whispered: 'Eat it, it is very good.'

"I munched the light cake, which was really excellent, and asked her: 'Did you make that?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'For me?'

" 'Yes, for you.'

" 'To enable me to support Ramadan?'

" 'Oh, don't be so unkind! I will bring you some every day.'

"Oh! the terrible month that I spent! A sugared, insipidly sweet month, a month that nearly drove me mad; a month of petting and of temptation, of anger and of vain efforts to resist temptation, but at last the three days of Beiram came, which I celebrated in my own fashion, and Ramadan was forgotten.

"The summer went on, and it was very hot, and in the first days of autumn Allouma appeared to me to be preoccupied and absent-minded and apparently taking no interest in anything; and, at last, when I sent for her one evening, she was not to be found in her room. I thought that she was roaming about the house, and gave orders to look for her. She had not come in, however, and so I opened my window and called Mohammed.

"The voice of the man, who was lying in his tent, replied:

" 'Yes, *moussié.*'

" 'Do you know where Allouma is?'

" 'No, *moussié.* It is not possible—— Is Allouma lost?'

"A few moments later my Arab came into my room, so agitated that he could not master his feelings, and said:

"'Is Allouma lost?'

"'Yes, she is lost.'

"'It is impossible.'

"'Go and look for her,' I said.

"He remained standing where he was, thinking, seeking for her motives, and unable to understand anything about it. Then he went into the empty room, where Allouma's clothes were lying about, in oriental disorder. He examined everything, as if he had been a police officer, or, rather, he sniffed about like a dog, and then, incapable of any lengthened effort, he murmured resignedly:

"'She has gone, she has gone!'

"I was afraid that some accident had happened to her; that she had fallen into some ravine and sprained her ankle, and I immediately sent out all the men about the place with orders to look for her until they should find her, and they hunted for her all that night, the next day and all the week long, but nothing was discovered that could put us on her track. I suffered, for I missed her very much; my house seemed empty and my existence a void. And then horrible thoughts entered my mind. I feared that she might have been carried off or even murdered; but when I spoke about it to Mohammed, and tried to make him share my fears, he invariably replied:

"'No; gone away.'

"Then he added the Arab word *r'ézale,* which means *gazelle,* as if he meant to say that she could run quickly and that she was far away.

"Three weeks passed, and I had given up all hopes of seeing my Arab mistress again, when one morning

Mohammed came into my room, with every sign of joy in his face, and said to me:

"'*Moussié,* Allouma has come back.'

"I jumped out of bed and said:

"'Where is she?'

"'She does not dare to come in! There she is, under the tree.'

"And stretching out his arm, he pointed out to me, through the window, a whitish spot at the foot of an olive tree.

"I got up immediately and went out to where she was. As I approached what looked like a mere bundle of linen thrown against the gnarled trunk of the tree, I recognized the large, dark eyes, the tattooed stars and the long, regular features of that semi-wild girl who had so captivated my senses. As I advanced toward her, I felt inclined to strike her, to make her suffer pain, and to have my revenge, and so I called out to her from a little distance:

"'Where have you been?'

"She did not reply, but remained motionless and inert, as if she were scarcely alive, resigned to any violence, and ready to receive my blows. I was standing up, close to her, looking in stupefaction at the rags with which she was covered, at those bits of silk and wool, covered with dust, torn and dirty, and, raising my hand, as if she had been a dog, I repeated:

"'Where have you come from?'

"'From yonder,' she said in a whisper.

"'Where is that?'

"'From the tribe.'

"'What tribe?'

"'Mine.'

"'Why did you go away?'

"When she saw that I was not going to beat her, she grew rather bolder and said in a low voice:

"'I was obliged to do it—I was forced to go; I could not stop in the house any longer.'

"I saw tears in her eyes, and immediately felt softened. I leaned over her, and when I turned round to sit down, I noticed Mohammed, who was watching us at a distance, and I went on very gently:

"'Come, tell me why you ran away.'

"Then she told me that for a long time in her nomad heart she had felt the irresistible desire to return to the tents, to lie, to run, to roll on the sand; to wander about the plains with the flocks, to feel nothing over her head, between the yellow stars in the sky and the blue stars in her face, except the thin, threadbare, patched canvas, through which she could see the sparks of fire in the sky when she awoke during the night.

"She made me understand all that in such simple and forcible language that I felt quite sure that she was not lying, and I pitied her and asked her:

"'Why did you not tell me that you wished to go away for a time?'

"'Because you would not have allowed me.'

"'If you had promised to come back, I should have consented.'

"'You would not have believed me.'

"Seeing that I was not angry, she began to laugh and said:

"'You see that is all over; I have come home again, and here I am. I only wanted a few days there. I have had enough of it now, it is finished and passed; the feeling is cured. I have come back and

have not that longing any more. I am very glad and you are very kind.'

"'Come into the house,' I said to her.

"She got up, and I took her hand, her delicate hand, with its slender fingers; and, triumphant in her rags, with her bracelets and her necklace jingling, she went gravely toward my house, where Mohammed was waiting for us. But, before going in, I said:

"'Allouma, whenever you want to return to your own people, tell me, and I will allow you to go.'

"'You promise?'

"'Yes, I promise.'

"'And I will make you a promise also. When I feel ill or unhappy'—and here she put her hand to her forehead with a magnificent gesture—'I shall say to you: "I must go yonder," and you will let me go.'

"I went with her to her room, followed by Mohammed, who was carrying some water, for there had been no time to tell the wife of Abd-el-Kader-el-Hadara that her mistress had returned. As soon as she got into her room and saw the wardrobe with the looking-glass in the door, she ran up to it, as a child does when it sees its mother. She looked at herself for a few seconds, pouted and then in a rather cross voice she said to the looking-glass:

"'Just you wait a moment; I have some silk dresses in the wardrobe. I shall be beautiful in a few minutes.'

"And I left her alone, to act the coquette to herself.

"Our life began its usual course again, as formerly, and I felt more and more under the influence

of the strange, merely physical attraction of that girl, for whom, at the same time, I felt a kind of paternal contempt. For two months all went well, and then I felt that she was again becoming nervous, agitated and rather low-spirited, and one day I said to her:

"'Do you want to return home again?'

"'Yes.'

"'And you did not dare to tell me?'

"'I did not venture to.'

"'Go, if you wish to; I give you leave.'

"She seized my hands and kissed them, as she did in all her outbursts of gratitude, and the same morning she disappeared.

"She came back, as she had done the first time, at the end of about three weeks, in rags, covered with dust, and satiated with her nomad life of sand and liberty. In two years she returned to her own people four times in this fashion.

"I took her back gladly, without any feeling of jealousy, for with me jealousy can only spring from love, as we Europeans understand it. I might very likely have killed her if I had surprised her in the act of deceiving me, but I should have done it just as one half kills a disobedient dog, from sheer violence. I should not have felt those torments, that consuming fire—Northern jealousy. I have just said that I should have killed her as I would a disobedient dog, and, as a matter of fact, I loved her somewhat in the same manner as one loves some very highly bred horse or dog, which it is impossible to replace. She was a splendid animal, a sensual animal, an animal made for pleasure, in the form of a woman.

"I cannot tell you what an immeasurable distance separated our two souls, although our hearts perhaps occasionally warmed toward each other. She was something belonging to my house, she was part of my life, she had become necessary to me, to the carnal man in me which was only eyes and senses.

"Well, one morning, Mohammed came into my room with a strange look on his face, that uneasy look of the Arabs, which resembles the furtive look of a cat, face to face with a dog, and when I noticed his expression, I said:

"'What is the matter now?'

"'Allouma has gone away.'

"I began to laugh and said: 'Where has she gone to?'

"'Gone away altogether, *moussié*.'

"'What do you mean by *gone away altogether?* You are mad, my man.'

"'No, *moussié*.'

"'Why has she gone away? Just explain yourself; come!'

"He remained motionless, and evidently did not wish to speak, and then he had one of those explosions of Arab rage, which make us stop in the street in front of two demoniacs, whose oriental silence and gravity suddenly give place to the most violent gesticulations, and the most ferocious vociferations, and I gathered amid his shouts that Allouma had run away with my shepherd, and when I had partially succeeded in calming him, I managed to extract the facts from him one by one.

"It was a long story, but at last I gathered that Mohammed had been watching Allouma, who used to meet a sort of vagabond whom my steward had

hired the month before, behind the neighboring cactus woods, or in the ravine where the oleanders bloomed. The night before Mohammed had seen her go out without seeing her return, and he repeated, in an exasperated manner: 'Gone, *moussié;* she has gone away!'

"I do not know why, but his conviction, the conviction that she had run away with this vagabond, laid hold of me irresistibly in a moment. It was absurd, unlikely, and yet certain, in virtue of that very unreasonableness which constitutes the only logic of women.

"Boiling over with indignation, I tried to recall the man's features, and I suddenly remembered having seen him the previous week, standing on a mound amid his flock and watching me. He was a tall Bedouin, the color of whose bare limbs blended with that of his rags; he was the type of a barbarous brute, with high cheek bones and hooked nose, a retreating chin, thin legs and a tall carcass in rags, with the shifty eyes of a jackal.

"I did not doubt for a moment that she had run away with that beggar. Why? Because she was Allouma, a daughter of the desert. A Parisian girl of a certain class would have run away with my coachman or some thief in the suburbs.

"'Very well,' I said to Mohammed. Then I got up, opened my window and began to draw in the stifling south wind, for the sirocco was blowing, and I thought to myself:

"Good heavens! she is—a woman, like so many others. Does anybody know what makes them act, what makes them love, what makes them follow, or throw over, a man? One certainly does know oc-

casionlly, but often one does not, and sometimes one is in doubt. Why did she run away with that repulsive brute? Why? Perhaps because the wind had been blowing from the South for a month; that was enough, a breath of wind! Does she know, do they know, even the cleverest of them, why they act? No more than a weather-cock that turns with the wind. An imperceptible breeze makes the iron, brass, zinc or wooden arrow revolve, just in the same manner as some imperceptible influence, some undiscernable impression moves the female heart, and urges it on to action; and it does not matter whether they belong to town or country, the suburbs or the desert.

"They can feel later on, provided that they can reason and understand, why they have done one thing rather than another; but, for the moment, they do not know, for they are the playthings of their own amazing sensibility, the thoughtless, giddy-headed slaves of circumstances, of their surroundings, of chance meetings, and of all the sensations with which their souls and their bodies vibrate."

Monsieur Auballe had risen, and, after walking up and down the room once or twice, he looked at me and said with a smile:

"That is love in the desert!"

"Suppose she were to come back?" I asked him.

"Wretched girl!" he replied. "But I should be very glad if she did return to me."

"And you would pardon the shepherd?"

"Good heavens, yes! With women one must always pardon—or else pretend not to see things."

FASCINATION

I CAN tell you neither the name of the country, nor the name of the man. It was a long, long way from here on a fertile and burning shore. We had been walking since the morning along the coast, with the blue sea bathed in sunlight on one side of us, and the shore covered with crops on the other. Flowers were growing quite close to the waves, those light, gentle, lulling waves. It was very warm, a soft warmth permeated with the odor of the rich, damp, fertile soil. One fancied one was inhaling germs.

I had been told, that evening, that I should meet with hospitality at the house of a Frenchman who lived in an orange grove at the end of a promontory. Who was he? I did not know. He had come there one morning ten years before, and had bought land which he planted with vines and sowed with grain. He had worked, this man, with passionate energy, with fury. Then as he went on from month to month, year to year, enlarging his boundaries, cultivating incessantly the strong virgin soil, he accumulated a fortune by his indefatigable labor.

But he kept on working, they said. Rising at daybreak, he would remain in the fields till evening, superintending everything without ceasing, tormented by one fixed idea, the insatiable desire for

money, which nothing can quiet, nothing satisfy. He now appeared to be very rich.

The sun was setting as I reached his house. It was situated as described, at the end of a promontory in the midst of a grove of orange trees. It was a large square house, quite plain, and overlooked the sea.

As I approached, a man wearing a long beard appeared in the doorway. Having greeted him, I asked if he would give me shelter for the night. He held out his hand and said, smiling:

"Come in, monsieur, consider yourself at home."

He led me into a room, and put a man servant at my disposal with the perfect ease and familiar graciousness of a man-of-the-world. Then he left me saying:

"We will dine as soon as you are ready to come downstairs."

We took dinner, sitting opposite each other, on a terrace facing the sea. I began to talk about this rich, distant, unknown land. He smiled, as he replied carelessly:

"Yes, this country is beautiful. But no country satisfies one when they are far from the one they love."

"You regret France?"

"I regret Paris."

"Why do you not go back?"

"Oh, I will return there."

And gradually we began to talk of French society, of the boulevards, and things Parisian. He asked me questions that showed he knew all about these things, mentioned names, all the familiar names in vaudeville known on the sidewalks.

"Whom does one see at Tortoni's now?"

"Always the same crowd, except those who died."

I looked at him attentively, haunted by a vague recollection. I certainly had seen that head somewhere. But where? And when? He seemed tired, although he was vigorous; and sad, although he was determined. His long, fair beard fell on his chest. He was somewhat bald and had heavy eyebrows and a thick mustache.

The sun was sinking into the sea, turning the vapor from the earth into a fiery mist. The orange blossoms exhaled their powerful, delicious fragrance. He seemed to see nothing besides me, and gazing steadfastly he appeared to discover in the depths of my mind the far-away, beloved and well-known image of the wide, shady pavement leading from the Madeleine to the Rue Drouot.

"Do you know Boutrelle?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Has he changed much?"

"Yes, his hair is quite white."

"And La Ridamie?"

"The same as ever."

"And the women? Tell me about the women. Let's see. Do you know Suzanne Verner?"

"Yes, very much. But that is over."

"Ah! And Sophie Astier?"

"Dead."

"Poor girl. Did you—did you know——"

But he ceased abruptly. And then, in a changed voice, his face suddenly turning pale, he continued:

"No, it is best that I should not speak of that any more, it breaks my heart."

Then, as if to change the current of his thoughts he rose.

"Would you like to go in?" he said.

"Yes, I think so."

And he preceded me into the house. The downstairs rooms were enormous, bare and mournful, and had a deserted look. Plates and glasses were scattered on the tables, left there by the dark-skinned servants who wandered incessantly about this spacious dwelling.

Two rifles were hanging from two nails on the wall; and in the corners of the rooms were spades, fishing poles, dried palm leaves, every imaginable thing set down at random when people came home in the evening and ready to hand when they went out at any time, or went to work.

My host smiled as he said:

"This is the dwelling, or rather the kennel, of an exile, but my own room is cleaner. Let us go there."

As I entered I thought I was in a second-hand store, it was so full of things of all descriptions, strange things of various kinds that one felt must be souvenirs. On the walls were two pretty paintings by well-known artists, draperies, weapons, swords and pistols, and exactly in the middle, on the principal panel, a square of white satin in a gold frame.

Somewhat surprised, I approached to look at it, and perceived a hairpin fastened in the centre of the glossy satin. My host placed his hand on my shoulder.

"That," said he, "is the only thing that I look at here, and the only thing that I have seen for ten

years. M. Prudhomme said: 'This sword is the most memorable day of my life.' I can say: 'This hairpin is all my life.'"

I sought for some commonplace remark, and ended by saying:

"You have suffered on account of some woman?"

He replied abruptly:

"Say, rather, that I am suffering like a wretch. . . . But come out on my balcony. A name rose to my lips just now which I dared not utter; for if you had said 'Dead' as you did of Sophie Astier, I should have fired a bullet into my brain, this very day."

We had gone out on the wide balcony from whence we could see two gulfs, one to the right and the other to the left, enclosed by high gray mountains. It was just twilight and the reflection of the sunset still lingered in the sky.

He continued:

"Is Jeanne de Limours still alive?"

His eyes were fastened on mine and were full of a trembling anxiety. I smiled.

"Parbleu—she is prettier than ever."

"Do you know her?"

"Yes."

He hesitated and then said:

"Very well?"

"No."

He took my hand.

"Tell me about her," he said.

"Why, I have nothing to tell. She is one of the most charming women, or, rather, girls, and the most admired in Paris. She leads a delightful existence and lives like a princess, that is all."

"I love her," he murmured in a tone in which he might have said "I am going to die." Then suddenly he continued:

"Ah! For three years we lived in a state of terror and delight. I almost killed her five or six times. She tried to pierce my eyes with that hairpin that you saw just now. Look, do you see that little white spot beneath my left eye? We loved each other. How can I explain that infatuation? You would not understand it."

"There must be a simple form of love, the result of the mutual impulse of two hearts and two souls. But there is also assuredly an atrocious form, that tortures one cruelly, the result of the occult blending of two unlike personalities who detest each other at the same time that they adore one another."

"In three years this woman had ruined me. I had four million francs which she squandered in her calm manner, quietly, eat them up with a gentle smile that seemed to fall from her eyes on to her lips."

"You know her? There is something irresistible about her. What is it? I do not know. Is it those gray eyes whose glance penetrates you like a gimlet and remains there like the point of an arrow? It is more likely the gentle, indifferent and fascinating smile that she wears like a mask. Her slow grace pervades you little by little; exhales from her like a perfume, from her slim figure that scarcely sways as she passes you, for she seems to glide rather than walk; from her pretty voice with its slight drawl that would seem to be the music of her smile; from her gestures, also, which are never exaggerated, but always appropriate, and intoxicate

your vision with their harmony. For three years she was the only being that existed for me on the earth! How I suffered; for she deceived me as she deceived everyone! Why? For no reason; just for the pleasure of deceiving. And when I found it out, when I treated her as a common girl and a beggar, she said quietly: 'Are we married?'

"Since I have been here I have thought so much about her that at last I understand her. She is Manon Lescaut come back to life. It is Manon, who could not love without deceiving; Manon for whom love, amusement, money, are all one."

He was silent. After a few minutes he resumed:

"When I had spent my last sou on her she said simply:

"'You understand, my dear boy, that I cannot live on air and weather. I love you very much, better than anyone, but I must live. Poverty and I could not keep house together."

"And if I should tell you what a horrible life I led with her! When I looked at her I would just as soon have killed her as kissed her. When I looked at her . . . I felt a furious desire to open my arms to embrace and strangle her. She had, back of her eyes, something false and intangible that made me execrate her; and that was, perhaps, the reason I loved her so well. The eternal feminine, the odious and seductive feminine, was stronger in her than in any other woman. She was full of it, overcharged, as with a venomous and intoxicating fluid. She was a woman to a greater extent than any one has ever been."

"And when I went out with her she would look at all men in such a manner that she seemed to

offer herself to each in a single glance. This exasperated me, and still it attached me to her all the more. This creature in just walking along the street belonged to everyone, in spite of me, in spite of herself, by the very fact of her nature, although she had a modest, gentle carriage. Do you understand?

"And what torture! At the theatre, at the restaurant she seemed to belong to others under my very eyes. And as soon as I left her she did belong to others.

"It is now ten years since I saw her and I love her better than ever."

Night spread over the earth. A strong perfume of orange blossoms pervaded the air. I said:

"Will you see her again?"

"Parbleu! I now have here, in land and money, seven to eight thousand francs. When I reach a million I shall sell out and go away. I shall have enough to live on with her for a year—one whole year. And then, good-bye, my life will be finished."

"But after that?" I asked.

"After that, I do not know. That will be all. I may possibly ask her to take me as a valet de chambre."

MOHAMMED FRIPOUILLE

"SHALL we take our coffee on the roof?" asked the captain.

"I shall be delighted," I answered.

He arose. It was already dark in the room, which was lighted only by an interior courtyard, according to the custom of Moorish houses. In front of the high, arched windows vines drooped from the broad roof, where one spent the warm summer evenings. Only the fruit remained on the table, enormous African fruits, grapes as large as plums, soft, purple-skinned figs, yellow pears, long, fat bananas and Tougourt dates in a basket of alfa grass.

The dusky-skinned man servant opened the door, and I went up the azure-walled stairway, which received from above the soft light of the dying day.

I heaved a deep sigh of relief as we stepped out on the roof. It overlooked the harbor and the distant shores.

The house the captain had bought was an old Arab dwelling, situated in the heart of that ancient city, in the midst of those winding alleys where the strange population of the African coast swarms.

Below us the square, flat roofs descended like giant steps to the slanting roofs of the European city. Behind these one could see the masts of the vessels riding at anchor, then the sea, the calm, blue, broad sea under the calm, blue sky.

We stretched out on some matting, our heads supported by cushions, and, while slowly drinking the savory coffee of that land, I watched the first stars pop out in the darkening sky. One could barely notice them, so far away, so pale, hardly visible.

A light, warm breeze fanned our cheeks, and from time to time heavier, hotter gusts, in which one could discern a vague odor, the odor of Africa, seemed to be a breath from the desert, from across the Atlas range of mountains. The captain, lying on his back, exclaimed:

"What a country, my friend! How sweet life is here! What a peculiar charm rest has here! How these nights are made for dreams!"

I was still watching the stars appear, with an idle yet lively curiosity, with a dreamy delight.

"You ought to tell me something of your life in the South," I murmured.

Captain Marret was one of the oldest officers in the African service, a former spahi who had won his way to fortune by his sword.

Thanks to him and to his widespread connections, I had been able to undertake a wonderful trip into the desert, and I had come that evening to thank him before returning to France.

"What kind of story do you wish?" he asked. "I have had so many adventures during my twelve years in the desert that I can hardly remember any of them."

"Tell me something about the Arabian women," I continued.

He did not answer. He remained stretched out on the matting, his arms folded and his hands under his head, and from time to time I could notice the

faint perfume of his cigar, its smoke rising straight up toward the sky in the calm evening air.

Suddenly he began to laugh.

"Oh, yes! I'll tell you about a queer affair that occurred in the beginning of my stay in Algeria.

"At that time we had in the African division extraordinary types, such as one no longer sees and that are no longer in existence, types which would have interested you enough to make you spend your whole life in this country.

"I was a simple spahi, a little twenty-two-year-old spahi, blond, plucky, supple and vigorous, a regular Algerian soldier, my friend. I was assigned to the military detachment at Boghar. You know Boghar, which is called the balcony of the South; from the top of the fort you saw that country of fire, barren, bare, desolate and stony. That is the real vestibule of the desert, the scorching yet wonderful frontier of the yellow solitudes.

"There were about forty of us spahis at Boghar, a party of convicts and a squadron of African 'chasseurs,' when we learned that the tribe Ouled-Berghi had murdered an English traveller who had come to this country, no one knows how, for the English seem to be possessed by the devil.

"Justice had to be meted out for this crime against a European, but the commanding officer hesitated to send out a company, thinking that an Englishman was not really worth so much trouble.

"As he was talking the matter over with the captain and the lieutenant, a sergeant of spahis, who was waiting to report, suddenly proposed to chastise the whole tribe if they would only give him six men.

"You know that in the South there is much more

freedom than in city garrisons, and between soldier and officer exists a certain friendship which one finds nowhere else.

"The captain began to laugh:

"'You, my man?'

"'Yes, captain, and if you wish I will bring the whole tribe back, prisoners.'

"The commanding officer, who was a whimsical sort of being, took him at his word:

"'You will leave to-morrow morning, with six men of your own picking, and if you don't fulfill your promise look out for yourself!'

"The sergeant smiled.

"'Fear nothing, sir. My prisoners will be here Wednesday noon, at the latest.'

"This sergeant, Mohammed Fripouille, as he was called, was really a remarkable man. He was a Turk, a real Turk, who had entered the service of France after a very varied and doubtless checkered life. He had travelled through many lands: Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, Palestine, and he must have left his mark in many of these places. He was a regular *bashi-bazouk*, hardy, a reveler, fierce and gay, with a calm, Oriental gaiety. He was fat, very fat, but as nimble as a monkey, and he was a wonderful rider. His mustache, incredibly thick and long, invariably brought to my mind a confused image of crescents and of scimitars. He hated the Arabs with an inexorable hatred, and treated them with a terrible, sly cruelty, continually inventing new treacheries, frightful and well-planned acts of perfidy.

"Besides all this, he possessed marvellous physical strength and was gifted with wonderful audacity.

"'Choose your men, my boy.'

"Mohammed took me. He had confidence in me, and I remained devoted to him, body and soul, for this choice, which pleased me as much then as the cross of honor pleased me later.

"We set out the following morning at dawn, just seven of us. My comrades all belonged to those bandits and pirates who, having marauded and wandered about in every possible country, end by enlisting in some foreign legion. Our African division used to be full of these blackguards, who were excellent soldiers, but not overscrupulous.

"Mohammed had given each of us ten pieces of rope, each about a yard long. Being the youngest and the lightest, I was given, in addition, a long rope, a hundred yards long. When he was asked what he expected to do with all this rope, he answered with his cunning, calm expression:

" 'We'll use that for Arab fishing.'

"And he slyly winked his eye, a trick he had learned from an old African chasseur, a Parisian.

"He rode at the head of our troop, wearing a red turban which he always wore in action, and smiling through his big mustache.

"This enormous Turk was really magnificent, with his powerful chest, his great shoulders and his quiet look. He rode a white horse, of medium size but sturdy; and the rider seemed ten times too heavy for his mount.

"We had entered a rocky little dell, bare, yellow, which extends to the valley of Chélif, and we were talking about our expedition. My companions spoke every imaginable language, for among them were one Spaniard, two Greeks, one American and three

Frenchmen. As for Mohammed, he burred in a manner truly marvellous.

"The sun, the terrible southern sun, which is unknown on the other side of the Mediterranean, was beating down on our shoulders, and we were advancing slowly, as one always does over there.

"We travelled all day long without seeing either a tree or an Arab.

"At about one o'clock in the afternoon, near a little spring which trickled through the rocks, we had eaten the bread and dried mutton we had taken with us; then, after about twenty minutes' rest, we had started off again.

"Toward six o'clock in the evening, after a circuitous march, according to the orders of our leader, we discovered a tribe encamped behind a small hill. The low, brown tents made dark spots against the yellow earth, looking like big desert mushrooms growing at the foot of this red mound, scorched by the sun.

"There were the people we were looking for. Their horses were grazing a little farther away, at the edge of a field of dark-green alfa grass.

"Mohammed gave the order: 'Gallop!' and we rushed into the middle of the camp like a hurricane. The women, wild with fright, covered with white rags which hung and floated around them, quickly ran for their tents, crawling, wriggling and shrieking like hunted beasts. The men, on the other hand, rushed out from all sides, ready to defend themselves.

"We went straight for the largest tent, that of the agha.

"We kept our swords sheathed, following the

example of Mohammed, who was galloping in a peculiar manner. He sat perfectly straight, absolutely motionless on his little horse, which was straining furiously under this ponderous mass. The calmness of the horseman with the long mustache contrasted strangely with the energy of the animal.

"The native chief came out of his tent just as we were arriving before it. He was a tall, thin, dark man, with piercing eyes, a high forehead and arched eyebrows. He cried in Arabic:

" 'What do you wish?'

"Mohammed, stopping his horse short, answered the man in his own language:

" 'Is it you that killed the English traveller?'

"The agha answered in a clear voice:

" 'I am not compelled to answer your questions.'

"Around us a storm was brewing. The Arabs were assembling on all sides, were crowding around us and shouting at us.

"They looked like fierce birds of prey, with their large hooked noses, their thin faces with high cheekbones, their loose garments fluttering in the wind.

"Mohammed, with his turban on the side of his head, was smiling, his eye was sparkling, one could almost see little thrills of pleasure on his plump, wrinkled cheeks.

"He continued in a thundering voice, which drowned the rising clamor:

" 'Death to him who has given death!'

"He pointed his revolver toward the brown face of the agha. I saw a little smoke issue from the barrel; then a little froth of pink brains and blood spurted from the chief's forehead. He fell on his

back like a log, opening his arms, which spread out the floating folds of his burnous like giant wings.

"I certainly thought that my last day had come, so great was the tumult around us.

"Mohammed had drawn his sword. We followed his example. Swinging the weapon around him in a circle, he cried:

"'Life to those who surrender! Death to the rest!'

"Seizing in his herculean grip the man nearest him, he flattened him out on his saddle and tied his hands, crying to us:

"'Do as I do, and kill all who resist.'

"In five minutes we had captured about twenty Arabs, whose arms we bound firmly. Then we chased the fugitives, for it had been a perfect rout as soon as they saw our naked swords. We brought back about thirty more men.

"All over the plain we could see white specks running. The women were dragging their children along and shrieking in a shrill voice. Yellow dogs, like jackals, were circling around us and barking, showing their white fangs.

"Mohammed, who seemed wild with joy, sprang from his horse and seized the rope which I had brought along:

"'Look out now, my lads,' he said. 'Two of you dismount!'

"Then he did a terrible yet comical thing: he made a string of prisoners, tied so that they were practically hanged. He had firmly tied the fists of the first captive, then he made a slip-knot which he passed around his neck, and then with the same rope he tied the arms of the following man and then

passed the rope around his neck. Our fifty prisoners soon found themselves so tied that the slightest movement of one of them toward escape would have strangled him as well as his two neighbors.

"Every motion they made tightened the knots around their necks, and they had to walk in step and at even distances, otherwise they would choke like rats in a trap.

"When this strange business was finished, Mohammed began to laugh with his silent laugh which shook his whole body without any noise issuing from his mouth.

" 'That's the Arabian chain,' he said.

"We ourselves began to be convulsed with laughter at the surprised and pitiful expressions of our prisoners.

" 'Now, children,' cried our leader, 'drive a stake in at each end and we'll tie up the bunch.'

"A stake was driven at each end of this white string of captives, looking like ghosts, who stood motionless, as if they had been changed to stone.

" 'Now let's have dinner!' said the Turk.

"A fire was kindled and we roasted a lamb, which we carved with our hands. Then we ate some dates we had found in the tents; we drank milk obtained in the same manner, and we managed to pick up a few silver trinkets forgotten by the fugitives in their haste.

"We were just quietly finishing our meal when I noticed, on the opposite hill, a strange-looking crowd. It was the women who had escaped shortly before, nothing but women. They were running toward us. I pointed them out to Mohammed the Rascal.

He smiled.

"'It's the desert!' he said.

"Ah! Yes, the desert!

"They came, galloping wildly, and soon we received a hail of stones which they threw without stopping their horses. As they passed by we saw that they were armed with knives, tent stakes and old kitchen utensils.

"Mohammed cried: 'Mount!' It was high time. The attack was terrible. They came to free the prisoners and tried to cut the rope. The Turk, seeing the danger, became furious and yelled: 'Kill them! Kill them! Kill them!' As we remained motionless, undecided before this new kind of attack, hesitating to kill women, he rushed forward, against the approaching troop.

"Alone, he charged this brigade of women in rags, and the rascal began to slash around him like a madman, with such rage, such fury that one could see a white body fall each time his arm was lowered.

"He was so fierce that the women, terrified, escaped as quickly as they had come, leaving behind them a dozen dead and wounded whose red blood stained their white garments.

"Mohammed, his features convulsed, returned to us, saying:

"'Come on, my lads; we had better get out of here; they will come back.'

"We retreated slowly, leaving our prisoners paralyzed by the fear of strangulation.

"The following day, as noon was ringing, we arrived at Boghar with our human chain. Only six had died on the way, but we had often been forced to loosen the knots from one end of the line to the

other, for a single jolt would strangle a dozen captives."

The captain was silent. I answered nothing. I was thinking of the strange country where such things could be seen; and in the black sky I gazed at the myriads of twinkling stars.

THE ORIENT

AUTUMN is here! When I feel the first touch of winter I always think of my friend who lives down yonder on the Asiatic frontier.

The last time I went to see him I knew that I should not see him again. It was toward the end of September three years ago. I found him stretched out on his divan, dreaming under the influence of opium. Holding out his hand to me without moving, he said:

"Stay here. Talk and I will answer you, but I shall not move, for you know that when once the drug has been swallowed you must stay on your back."

I sat down and began to tell him a thousand things about Paris and the boulevards.

But he interrupted me.

"What you are saying does not interest me in the least, for I am thinking only of the countries under other skies. Oh, how that poor Gautier must have suffered, always haunted by the longing for the Orient! You don't know what that means, how that country takes hold of you, how it captivates you, penetrates you to your inmost being and will not let you go. It enters into you through the eye, through the skin, with all its invisible seductions, and it holds you by an invisible thread, which is unceasingly pulling you, in whatever spot on earth chance may have flung you. I take the drug in or-

der to muse on that land in the delicious torpor of opium."

He stopped and closed his eyes.

"What makes it so pleasant to you to take this poison?" I asked. "What physical joy does it give to take it until it kills you?"

"It is not a physical joy," he replied; "it is better than that, it is more. I am often sad; I detest life, which wounds me every day on all sides, with all its angles, its hardships. Opium consoles for everything, makes one take part in all. Do you know that state of mind that I might call teasing irritation? I ordinarily live in that state. And there are two things that can cure me of it: opium or the Orient. As soon as I have taken opium I lie down and wait, perhaps one hour and sometimes two. Then, when it begins to take effect I feel first a slight trembling in the hands and feet, not a cramp, but a vibrant numbness; then little by little I have the strange and delicious sensation of feeling my limbs disappear. It seems to me as if they were taken off, and this feeling grows upon me until it fills me completely. I have no longer any body; I retain merely a kind of pleasant memory of it. Only my head is there, and it works. I muse. I think with an infinite, material joy, with unequaled lucidity, with a surprising penetration. I reason, I deduce, I understand everything. I discover ideas that never before have come to me; I descend to new depths and mount to marvelous heights; I float in an ocean of thought, and I taste the incomparable happiness, the ideal enjoyment of the chaste and serene intoxication of pure intelligence.

Again he stopped and closed his eyes. I said:

"Your longing for the Orient is due only to this constant intoxication. You are living in a state of hallucination. How can one long for that barbarous country, where the mind is dead, where the sterile imagination does not go beyond the narrow limits of life and makes no effort to take flight, to expand and conquer?"

"What does practical thought matter?" he replied. "What I love is dreaming. That only is good, and that only is sweet. Implacable reality would lead me to suicide, if dreaming did not permit me to wait.

"You say that the Orient is the land of barbarians. Stop, wretched man! It is the country of the sages, the hot country where one lets life flow by, where angles are rounded.

"We are the barbarians, we men of the West who call ourselves civilized; we are hateful barbarians, who live a painful life, like brutes.

"Look at our cities built of stone and our furniture made of hard and knotty wood. We mount, panting, a high, narrow stairway, to go into stuffy apartments into which the cold wind comes whistling, only to escape immediately again through a chimney which creates deadly currents of air that are strong enough to turn a windmill. Our chairs are hard, our walls cold and covered with ugly paper; everywhere we are wounded by angles—angles on our tables, on our mantels, on our doors and on our beds. We live standing up or sitting in our chairs, but we never lie down except to sleep, which is ridiculous, for in sleeping you are not conscious of the happiness there is in being stretched out flat.

"And then to think of our intellectual life! It is filled with incessant struggle and strife. Worry

hovers over us and preoccupations tease us; we no longer have time to seek and pursue the two or three good things within our reach.

"It is war to the finish. And our character, even more than our furniture, is full of angles—angles everywhere.

"We are hardly out of bed when we hasten to our work, in rain or snow. We fight against rivals, competition, hostility. Every man is an enemy whom we must fear and overcome and with whom we must resort to ruse. Even love has with us its aspects of victory and defeat: that also is a struggle."

He reflected for some moments and then continued:

"I know the house that I am going to buy. It is square, with a flat roof and wooden trimmings, in the Oriental fashion. From the terrace you can see the sea, where white sails like pointed wings are passing, and Greek or Turkish vessels. There are hardly any openings on the outside walls. A large garden, where the air is heavy under the shadow of palms, is in the center of this abode. A jet of water rises from under the trees and falls in spray into a large marble basin, the bottom of which is covered with golden sand. I shall bathe there at any hour of the day, between two pipes, two dreams, two kisses.

"I will not have any servant, any hideous maid with greasy apron who kicks up the dirty bottom of her skirt with her worn shoes. Oh, that kick of the heel which shows the yellow ankle! It fills my heart with disgust, and yet I cannot avoid it. Those wretches all do it.

"I shall no longer hear the tramping of shoes on the floor, the loud slamming of doors, the crash of breaking dishes.

"I will have beautiful black slaves, draped in white veils, who run barefoot over heavy carpets.

"My walls shall be soft and rounded, like a woman's breasts; and my divans, ranged in a circle around each apartment, shall be heaped with cushions of all shapes, so that I may lie down in all possible postures.

"Then, when I am tired of this delicious repose, tired of enjoying immobility and my eternal dream, tired of the calm pleasure of well-being, I shall have a swift black or white horse brought to my door.

"And I shall ride away on it, drinking in the air which stings and intoxicates, the air that whistles when one is galloping furiously.

"And I shall fly like an arrow over this colored earth, which intoxicates the eye with the effect of the flavor of wine.

"In the calm of the evening I shall ride madly toward the wide horizon, which is tinged rose-color by the setting sun. Everything is rosy down there in the twilight, the scorched mountains, the sand, the clothing of the Arabs, the white coat of the horses.

"Pink flamingoes rise out of the marshes under the pink sky, and I shall shout deliriously, bathed in the illimitable rosiness of the world.

"I shall no longer see men dressed in black, sitting on uncomfortable chairs and drinking absinthe while talking of business or walking along the pavements in the midst of the deafening noise of cabs in the street.

"I shall know nothing of the state of the Bourse, the fluctuations of stocks and bonds, all the useless stupidities in which we waste our short, miserable and treacherous existence. Why all this trouble, all this suffering, all these struggles? I shall rest, sheltered from the wind, in my bright, sumptuous home.

"And I shall have four or five wives in luxurious apartments—five wives who have come from the five quarters of the earth and who will bring to me a taste of feminine beauty as found in all races."

Again he stopped and then he said softly:

"Leave me."

I went, and I never saw him again.

Two months later he sent me these three words only: "I am happy."

His letter smelled of incense and other sweet perfumes.

CHALI

"I HAD a very singular adventure once," said Admiral de la Vallée, who had been dozing in his armchair. His voice was like an old woman's and he had that eternal, dry, wrinkled smile à la Voltaire, that made people think he was a dreadful skeptic.

I was thirty years of age and first lieutenant in the navy, when I was placed in charge of an astronomical expedition to Central India. The English Government provided me with all the necessary means for carrying out my enterprise, and I was soon busied with a few assistants in that strange, surprising country.

It would take ten volumes to relate that journey. I went through wonderfully magnificent regions, and was received by strangely handsome princes, who entertained me with incredible magnificence. For two months it seemed to me as if I were one of the actors in a poet's fancy in a fairy kingdom, on the back of imaginary elephants. In the midst of wild forests I discovered extraordinary ruins, delicate and chiselled like jewels, flimsy as lace and enormous as mountains, those fabulous, divine monuments which are so graceful that one falls in love with their form as one falls in love with a woman, and feels a physical and sensual pleasure in looking at them.

As Victor Hugo says, "Although wide awake, I was walking in a dream."

Toward the end of my journey I reached Ganhard, which was formerly one of the most prosperous towns in Central India, but is now much decayed and governed by a wealthy, arbitrary, violent, generous, and cruel prince. His name is Rajah Maddan, a true Oriental potentate, delicate and barbarous, affable and sanguinary, combining feminine gentleness with pitiless ferocity.

The city lies at the bottom of a valley, on the banks of a little lake, surrounded by pagodas, whose walls are washed by its waters.

At a distance the city looks like a white spot which grows larger as one approaches it, and gradually one discovers the domes and spires, all the slender and graceful characteristics of Indian monuments.

At about an hour's distance from the gates, I met a superbly caparisoned elephant, surrounded by a guard of honor which the sovereign had sent me, and I was conducted to the palace with great ceremony.

I should have liked to have taken time to put on my gala uniform, but royal impatience would not admit of it. The rajah was anxious to make my acquaintance, to know what he might expect from me.

I was introduced into a great hall surrounded by galleries, in the midst of bronze-colored soldiers in splendid uniforms; all about me stood men dressed in striking robes studded with precious stones.

I saw a shining mass, a kind of resplendent sun, reposing on a bench like our garden benches, without a back; it was the rajah, who was waiting for

me, motionless, in a robe of the purest canary color. He had some ten or fifteen million of francs' worth of diamonds on him, and, by itself, on his forehead glistened the famous star of Delhi, which has always belonged to the illustrious dynasty of the Pariharas of Mundore, from whom my host was descended.

He was a man of about five-and-twenty, who appeared to have some negro blood in his veins, although he belonged to the purest Hindoo race. He had large, almost motionless, somewhat expressionless eyes, full lips, a curly beard, low forehead, and dazzling sharp white teeth, which he frequently showed in a mechanical smile. He got up and gave me his hand in the English fashion, and then made me sit down beside him on a bench which was so high that my feet hardly touched the ground, and I was very uncomfortable.

He immediately proposed a tiger hunt for the next day. War and hunting were his chief occupations, and he could hardly understand how one could care for anything else. He was evidently fully persuaded that I had only come all that distance to amuse him a little, and to be the companion of his pleasures.

As I stood greatly in need of his assistance, I tried to flatter his tastes, and he was so pleased that he immediately wished to show me how his trained boxers fought, and led the way into a kind of arena situated within the palace.

At his command two naked men appeared, their hands covered with steel claws. They immediately began to attack each other, trying to strike one another with these sharp weapons, which left long cuts,

from which the blood flowed freely down their dark skin.

This lasted till their bodies were a mass of wounds, from tearing each other's flesh with this sort of rake with sharp-pointed prongs. One of them had his jaw smashed, while the ear of the other was split into three pieces.

The prince looked on with ferocious pleasure, uttered grunts of delight, and imitated all their movements with careless gestures, crying out constantly:

"Strike, strike hard!"

One fell down unconscious, and had to be carried out of the arena, covered with blood, while the rajah uttered a sigh of regret because it was so soon over.

He turned to me to know my opinion; I was disgusted, but congratulated him loudly. He then gave orders that I was to be conducted to Couch-Mahal—the palace of pleasure—where I was to be lodged.

This bijou palace was situated at the extremity of the royal park, and one of its walls was built into the sacred lake of Vihara. It was square and had three rows of galleries with colonnades of most beautiful workmanship. At each angle there were light, lofty or low towers, either single or in pairs; no two were alike, and they looked like flowers growing out of that graceful plant of Oriental architecture. All were surmounted by fantastic roofs, like coquettish ladies' hats.

In the middle of the edifice a large white dome raised its round cupola beside a beautiful clock tower.

The whole building was sculptured in arabesques from top to bottom; those exquisite traceries which

delight the eye; motionless processions of delicate figures whose attitudes and gestures told in stone the story of Indian manners and customs.

The rooms were lighted by arched windows overlooking the gardens. On the marble floor were graceful bouquets designed in onyx, lapis-lazuli, and agate.

I had scarcely time to finish my toilet when Haribadada, a court dignitary who was specially charged to communicate with me, announced his sovereign's visit.

The saffron-colored rajah appeared, again shook hands with me, and began to tell me a thousand different things, constantly asking me for my opinion, which I had great difficulty in giving him. Then he wished to show me the ruins of the former palace at the other extremity of the gardens.

It was a real forest of stones inhabited by a tribe of large apes. On our approach the males began to run along the walls, making the most hideous faces at us, while the females ran away, carrying off their young in their arms. The rajah shouted with laughter and pinched my arm to draw my attention and to testify his own delight, and sat down in the midst of the ruins; while, around us, squatting on the top of the walls, perching on every eminence, a number of animals with white whiskers, put out their tongues and shook their fists at us.

When he had seen enough of this, the yellow rajah rose and began to walk along sedately, keeping me always at his side, happy at having shown me such things on the very day of my arrival, and reminding me that a grand tiger hunt was to take place the next day, in my honor.

I was present, and also at a second, third, and at ten, twenty in succession. We hunted all the animals which the country produces; the panther, the bear, elephant, antelope, the hippopotamus, and the crocodile—and how many more I know not, half the animals in the world, I should say. I was disgusted at seeing so much blood flow, and tired of this monotonous pleasure.

At length the prince's ardor abated and, at my urgent request, he left me a little leisure for work, and contented himself by loading me with costly presents. He sent me jewels, magnificent stuffs, and well-broken animals of all sorts, which Haribadada presented to me with apparently as grave respect as if I had been the sun himself, although he heartily despised me at the bottom of his heart.

Every day a procession of servants brought me in covered dishes, a portion of each course that was served at the royal table; every day he seemed to take an extreme pleasure in getting up some new entertainment for me—dances by the bayaderes, jugglers, reviews of the troops, and I was obliged to pretend to enjoy it all so as not to hurt his feelings when he wished to show me his wonderful country in all its charm and all its splendor.

As soon as I was left alone for a few moments I either worked or went to see the monkeys, whose company pleased me a great deal better than that of their royal master.

One evening, however, on coming back from a walk, I found Haribadada outside the gate of my palace. He told me in mysterious tones that a gift from the king was waiting for me in my room, and he said that his master begged me to excuse him for

not having sooner thought of offering me that of which I had been deprived for such a long time.

After these obscure remarks the ambassador bowed and withdrew.

When I went in I saw six little girls standing against the wall, motionless, side by side, like smelts on a skewer. The eldest was perhaps ten, and the youngest eight years old. For the first moment I could not understand why this girls' school had taken up its abode in my rooms; then, however, I divined the prince's delicate attention: he had made me a present of a harem, and had chosen it very young from an excess of generosity.

For some time I remained confused and embarrassed, ashamed in the presence of these children, who looked at me with great grave eyes which seemed already to divine what I should want of them.

I did not know what to say to them; I felt inclined to send them back; but one cannot return the presents of a prince; it would have been a mortal insult. I was obliged, therefore, to keep them, and to install this troop of children in my rooms.

They stood motionless, looking at me, waiting for my orders, trying to read my thoughts in my eyes. Confound such a present! How dreadfully it was in my way! At last, thinking that I must look rather ridiculous, I asked the eldest her name.

"Châli," she replied.

This little creature, with her beautiful skin, which was slightly yellow, like old ivory, was a marvel, a perfect statue, with the somewhat long, severe lines on her face.

I then asked, in order to see what she would reply, and also, perhaps, to embarrass her:

"What have you come here for?"

She replied, in her soft, harmonious voice:

"I have come to be altogether at my lord's disposal, and to do whatever he wishes."

She was evidently quite resigned.

I put the same question to the youngest, who answered immediately in her shrill voice:

"I am here to do whatever you ask me, my master."

This one was like a little mouse, and was very taking, just as they all were, so I took her in my arms and kissed her. The others made a movement to go away, thinking, no doubt, that I had made my choice; but I ordered them to stay, and sitting down in the Indian fashion, I made them all sit round me, and began to tell them fairy tales, for I spoke their language fairly well.

They listened attentively, thrilled by the wonderful story, trembling with awe, and making gestures with their hands. Poor little things, they were not thinking any longer of the reason why they were sent to me.

When I had finished my story, I called Latchmân, my confidential servant, and made him bring sweetmeats and cakes, of which they ate enough to make themselves ill; then, as I began to find the adventure rather funny, I organized games to amuse them.

One of these diversions had an enormous success. I made a bridge of my legs, and the six children ran underneath, the smallest beginning and the tallest always knocking against them a little, because she

did not stoop enough. It made them shout with laughter, and these young voices sounding beneath the low vaults of my sumptuous palace seemed to wake it up and to people it with childlike gayety, filling it with life.

Next I took great interest in seeing to the sleeping apartments of my innocent concubines, and in the end I saw them safely locked up under the surveillance of four female servants, whom the prince had sent me at the same time in order to take care of my sultanas.

For a week I took the greatest pleasure in acting the papa toward these living dolls. We had capital games of hide-and-seek, puss-in-the-corner, etc., which gave them the greatest pleasure, for every day I taught them a new game, to their intense delight.

My house now resembled a school, and my little friends, dressed in beautiful silk stuffs and in materials embroidered with gold and silver, ran up and down the long galleries and the quiet rooms like little human animals.

At last, one evening, without my knowing exactly how it happened, the oldest of them, the one called Châli, who looked so like an ivory statue, became my wife.

She was an adorable little creature, timid and gentle, who soon got to love me ardently, with some degree of shame, with hesitation, as if afraid of European justice, with reserve and scruples, and yet with passionate tenderness. I cherished her as if I had been her father.

The others continued to play in the palace like a

lot of happy kittens, and Châli never left me except when I went to the prince.

We passed delicious hours together in the ruins of the old castle, surrounded by the monkeys, who had become our friends.

She used to sit on my knees, turning all sorts of things over in her little sphinx's head, or perhaps not thinking of anything, retaining the beautiful, charming hereditary pose of that noble and dreamy people, the hieratic pose of the sacred statues.

In a large brass dish I had brought provisions, cakes, fruits. The apes came nearer and nearer, followed by their young ones, who were more timid; at last they sat down round us in a circle, without daring to come any nearer, waiting for me to distribute my delicacies. Then, almost invariably, a male more daring than the rest would come to me with outstretched hand, like a beggar, and I would give him something, which he would take to his wife. All the others immediately began to utter furious cries, cries of rage and jealousy, and I could not make the terrible racket cease except by throwing each one a share.

As I was very comfortable in the ruins, I had my instruments brought there, so that I might be able to work. As soon, however, as they saw the copper fittings on my scientific instruments, the monkeys, no doubt taking them for some deadly engines, fled on all sides, uttering the most piercing cries.

I often also spent my evening with Châli on one of the outer galleries that overlooked the lake of Vihara. Without speaking, we looked at the bright moon gliding over the sky and throwing a mantle of trembling silver across the water, and down below,

on the farther shore, the row of small pagodas, like dainty mushrooms with their stalks in the water. Taking the thoughtful little head between my hands, I printed a long, soft kiss on Châli's polished brow, on her great eyes, which were full of the secret of that ancient land of mystery, and on her calm lips, which opened to my caress. I felt a vague, though strongly poetic sensation, a sensation that in this girl I possessed a whole race, that mother race from which all the rest originated.

The prince continued to load me with presents. One day he sent me an object which excited a passionate admiration in Châli. It was merely one of those cardboard boxes covered with shells that can be bought at any European seaside resort for a trifling sum. But there it was a jewel beyond price, and no doubt was the first that had found its way into the kingdom. I put it on a table and left it there, wondering at the value which was set upon this trumpery article out of a bazaar.

But Châli never got tired of looking at it, of admiring it ecstatically. From time to time she would say to me, "May I touch it?" And when I gave her permission, she raised the lid, closed it again with the greatest care, touched the shells very gently, the contact appearing to give her real physical pleasure.

However, my work was now finished and it was time for me to return. I was a long time in making up my mind, detained by tenderness for my little friend, but at last I was obliged to fix the day of departure.

The prince got up fresh hunting excursions and fresh wrestling matches, but after a fortnight of

these pleasures I declared that I could stay no longer, and he gave me my liberty.

My farewell from Châli was heartrending. She cried a long time, with her head on my breast, her little frame shaken with sobs. I did not know how to console her; my kisses were no good.

All at once an idea struck me, and I went and got the shell box, and putting it into her hands, said: "That is for you; it is yours."

Then I saw her first smile. Her whole face was lighted up with an inward joy, that profound joy that comes when apparently impossible dreams are suddenly realized; then she embraced me ardently.

All the same, she wept bitterly when I bade her a last farewell.

I gave paternal kisses and cakes to all the children, and then I left the place.

II

Two years had passed, when my duties again called me to Bombay; and, because I knew the country and the language well, I was left there to undertake another mission.

I finished what I had to do as quickly as possible, and as I had a considerable amount of spare time on my hands, I determined to go and see my friend the King of Ganhard and my dear little Châli once more, though I expected to find her much changed.

The rajah received me with every demonstration of pleasure, and hardly left me for a moment during the first day of my visit. At night, however, when

I was alone, I sent for Haribadada, and after several irrelevant questions, I said to him:

"Do you know what has become of little Châli, whom the rajah gave me?"

He immediately assumed a sad and troubled look, and said, in evident embarrassment:

"We had better not speak of her."

"Why? She was a dear little woman."

"She turned out badly, sir."

"What — Châli? What has become of her? Where is she?"

"I meant to say that she came to a bad end."

"A bad end! Is she dead?"

"Yes. She committed a very dreadful action."

I was very much distressed. I felt my heart beat, and my breast was oppressed with grief, but I insisted on knowing what she had done and what had happened to her.

The man became more and more embarrassed, and murmured: "You had better not ask about it."

"But I want to know."

"She stole——"

"Who—Châli? What did she steal?"

"Something that belonged to you."

"To me? What do you mean?"

"The day you left she stole that little box which the prince had given you; it was found in her hands."

"What box are you talking about?"

"The box covered with shells."

"But I gave it to her."

The Indian looked at me with stupefaction, then replied: "Well, she declared with the most sacred oaths that you had given it to her, but nobody could

believe that you could have given a king's present to a slave, and so the rajah had her punished."

"How was she punished? What was done to her?"

"She was tied up in a sack, and thrown into the lake from this window, from the window of the room in which we are, where she committed the theft."

I felt the most profound grief that I ever experienced, and I made a sign to Haribadada to go away, so that he might not see my tears; and I spent the night on the gallery that overlooked the lake, on the gallery where I had so often held the poor child on my knees.

I pictured to myself her pretty little body lying decomposed in a sack in the dark waters beneath me, those waters which we had so often looked at together.

The next day I left again, in spite of the rajah's entreaties and evident vexation; and I now still feel as if I had never loved any one but Châli.

JULIE ROMAIN

TWO years ago this spring I was making a walking tour along the shore of the Mediterranean. Is there anything more pleasant than to meditate while walking at a good pace along a highway? One walks in the sunlight, through the caressing breeze, at the foot of the mountains, along the coast of the sea. And one dreams! What a flood of illusions, loves, adventures pass through a pedestrian's mind during a two hours' march! What a crowd of confused and joyous hopes enter into you with the mild, light air! You drink them in with the breeze, and they awaken in your heart a longing for happiness which increases with the hunger induced by walking. The fleeting, charming ideas fly and sing like birds.

I was following that long road which goes from Saint Raphael to Italy, or, rather, that long, splendid panoramic highway which seems made for the representation of all the love-poems of earth. And I thought that from Cannes, where one poses, to Monaco, where one gambles, people come to this spot of the earth for hardly any other purpose than to get embroiled or to throw away money on chance games, displaying under this delicious sky and in this garden of roses and oranges all base vanities and foolish pretensions and vile lusts, showing up

the human mind such as it is, servile, ignorant, arrogant and full of cupidity.

Suddenly I saw some villas in one of those ravishing bays that one meets at every turn of the mountain; there were only four or five fronting the sea at the foot of the mountains, and behind them a wild fir wood slopes into two great valleys, that were untraversed by roads. I stopped short before one of these chalets, it was so pretty: a small white house with brown trimmings, overrun with rambler roses up to the top.

The garden was a mass of flowers, of all colors and all kinds, mixed in a coquettish, well-planned disorder. The lawn was full of them, big pots flanked each side of every step of the porch, pink or yellow clusters framed each window, and the terrace with the stone balustrade, which enclosed this pretty little dwelling, had a garland of enormous red bells, like drops of blood. Behind the house I saw a long avenue of orange trees in blossom, which went up to the foot of the mountain.

Over the door appeared the name, "Villa d'Antan," in small gold letters.

I asked myself what poet or what fairy was living there, what inspired, solitary being had discovered this spot and created this dream house, which seemed to nestle in a nosegay.

A workman was breaking stones up the street, and I went to him to ask the name of the proprietor of this jewel.

"It is Madame Julie Romain," he replied.

Julie Romain! In my childhood, long ago, I had heard them speak of this great actress, the rival of Rachel.

No woman ever was more applauded and more loved—especially more loved! What duels and suicides on her account and what sensational adventures! How old was this seductive woman now? Sixty, seventy, seventy-five! Julie Romain here, in this house! The woman who had been adored by the greatest musician and the most exquisite poet of our land! I still remember the sensation (I was then twelve years of age) which her flight to Sicily with the latter, after her rupture with the former, caused throughout France.

She had left one evening, after a *première,* where the audience had applauded her for a whole half hour, and had recalled her eleven times in succession. She had gone away with the poet, in a post-chaise, as was the fashion then; they had crossed the sea, to love each other in that antique island, the daughter of Greece, in that immense orange wood which surrounds Palermo, and which is called the "Shell of Gold."

People told of their ascension of Mount Etna and how they had leaned over the immense crater, arm in arm, cheek to cheek, as if to throw themselves into the very abyss.

Now he was dead, that maker of verses so touching and so profound that they turned the heads of a whole generation, so subtle and so mysterious that they opened a new world to the younger poets.

The other one also was dead—the deserted one, who had attained through her musical periods that are alive in the memories of all, periods of triumph and of despair, intoxicating triumph and heart-rending despair.

And she was there, in that house veiled by flowers!

I did not hesitate, but rang the bell.

A small servant answered, a boy of eighteen with awkward mien and clumsy hands. I wrote in pencil on my card a gallant compliment to the actress, begging her to receive me. Perhaps, if she knew my name, she would open her door to me.

The little valet took it in, and then came back, asking me to follow him. He led me to a neat and decorous salon, furnished in the Louis-Philippe style, with stiff and heavy furniture, from which a little maid of sixteen, slender but not pretty, took off the covers in my honor.

Then I was left alone.

On the walls hung three portraits, that of the actress in one of her rôles, that of the poet in his close-fitting greatcoat and the ruffled shirt then in style, and that of the musician seated at a piano.

She, blond, charming, but affected, according to the fashion of her day, was smiling, with her pretty mouth and blue eyes; the painting was careful, fine, elegant, but lifeless.

Those faces seemed to be already looking upon posterity.

The whole place had the air of a bygone time, of days that were done and men who had vanished.

A door opened and a little woman entered, old, very old, very small, with white hair and white eyebrows, a veritable white mouse, and as quick and furtive of movement.

She held out her hand to me, saying in a voice still fresh, sonorous and vibrant:

"Thank you, monsieur. How kind it is of the

men of to-day to remember the women of yesterday! Sit down."

I told her that her house had attracted me, that I had inquired for the proprietor's name, and that, on learning it, I could not resist the desire to ring her bell.

"This gives me all the more pleasure, monsieur," she replied, "as it is the first time that such a thing has happened. When I received your card, with the gracious note, I trembled as if an old friend who had disappeared for twenty years had been announced to me. I am like a dead body, whom no one remembers, of whom no one will think until the day when I shall actually die; then the newspapers will mention Julie Romain for three days, relating anecdotes and details of my life, reviving memories, and praising me greatly. Then all will be over with me."

After a few moments of silence, she continued:

"And this will not be so very long now. In a few months, in a few days, nothing will remain but a little skeleton of this little woman who is now alive."

She raised her eyes toward her portrait, which smiled down upon this caricature of herself; then she looked at those of the two men, the disdainful poet and the inspired musician, who seemed to say: "What does this ruin want of us?"

An indefinable, poignant, irresistible sadness overwhelmed my heart, the sadness of existences that have had their day, but who are still debating with their memories, like a person drowning in deep water.

From my seat I could see on the highroad the

handsome carriages that were whirling from Nice to Monaco; inside them I saw young, pretty, rich and happy women and smiling, satisfied men. Following my eye, she understood my thought and murmured with a smile of resignation:

"One cannot both be and have been."

"How beautiful life must have been for you!" I said.

She heaved a great sigh.

"Beautiful and sweet! And for that reason I regret it so much."

I saw that she was disposed to talk of herself, so I began to question her, gently and discreetly, as one might touch bruised flesh.

She spoke of her successes, her intoxications and her friends, of her whole triumphant existence.

"Was it on the stage that you found your most intense joys, your true happiness?" I asked.

"Oh, no!" she replied quickly.

I smiled; then, raising her eyes to the two portraits, she said, with a sad glance:

"It was with them."

"Which one?" I could not help asking.

"Both. I even confuse them up a little now in my old woman's memory, and then I feel remorse."

"Then, madame, your acknowledgment is not to them, but to Love itself. They were merely its interpreters."

"That is possible. But what interpreters!"

"Are you sure that you have not been, or that you might not have been, loved as well or better by a simple man, but not a great man, who would have offered to you his whole life and heart, all his

thoughts, all his days, his whole being, while these gave you two redoubtable rivals, Music and Poetry?"

"No, monsieur, no!" she exclaimed emphatically, with that still youthful voice, which caused the soul to vibrate. "Another one might perhaps have loved me more, but he would not have loved me as these did. Ah! those two sang to me of the music of love as no one else in the world could have sung of it. How they intoxicated me! Could any other man express what they knew so well how to express in tones and in words? Is it enough merely to love if one cannot put all the poetry and all the music of heaven and earth into love? And they knew how to make a woman delirious with songs and with words. Yes, perhaps there was more of illusion than of reality in our passion; but these illusions lift you into the clouds, while realities always leave you trailing in the dust. If others have loved me more, through these two I have understood, felt and worshipped love."

Suddenly she began to weep.

She wept silently, shedding tears of despair.

I pretended not to see, looking off into the distance. She resumed, after a few minutes:

"You see, monsieur, with nearly every one the heart ages with the body. But this has not happened with me. My body is sixty-nine years old, while my poor heart is only twenty. And that is the reason why I live all alone, with my flowers and my dreams."

There was a long silence between us. She grew calmer and continued, smiling:

"How you would laugh at me, if you knew, if you knew how I pass my evenings, when the weather

is fine. I am ashamed and I pity myself at the same time."

Beg as I might, she would not tell me what she did. Then I rose to leave.

"Already!" she exclaimed.

And as I said that I wished to dine at Monte Carlo, she asked timidly:

"Will you not dine with me? It would give me a great deal of pleasure."

I accepted at once. She rang, delighted, and after giving some orders to the little maid she took me over her house.

A kind of glass-enclosed veranda, filled with shrubs, opened into the dining-room, revealing at the farther end the long avenue of orange trees extending to the foot of the mountain. A low seat, hidden by plants, indicated that the old actress often came there to sit down.

Then we went into the garden, to look at the flowers. Evening fell softly, one of those calm, moist evenings when the earth breathes forth all her perfumes. Daylight was almost gone when we sat down at table. The dinner was good and it lasted a long time, and we became intimate friends, she and I, when she understood what a profound sympathy she had aroused in my heart. She had taken two thimblefuls of wine, as the phrase goes, and had grown more confiding and expansive.

"Come, let us look at the moon," she said. "I adore the good moon. She has been the witness of my most intense joys. It seems to me that all my memories are there, and that I need only look at her to bring them all back to me. And even—sometimes—in the evening—I offer to myself a pretty

play—yes, pretty—if you only knew! But no, you would laugh at me. I cannot—I dare not—no, no—really—no."

I implored her to tell me what it was.

"Come, now! come, tell me; I promise you that I will not laugh. I swear it to you—come, now!"

She hesitated. I took her hands—those poor little hands, so thin and so cold!—and I kissed them one after the other, several times, as her lovers had once kissed them. She was moved and hesitated.

"You promise me not to laugh?"

"Yes, I swear it to you."

"Well, then, come."

She rose, and as the little domestic, awkward in his green livery, removed the chair behind her, she whispered quickly a few words into his ear.

"Yes, madame, at once," he replied.

She took my arm and led me to the veranda.

The avenue of oranges was really splendid to see. The full moon made a narrow path of silver, a long bright line, which fell on the yellow sand, between the round, opaque crowns of the dark trees.

As these trees were in bloom, their strong, sweet perfume filled the night, and swarming among their dark foliage I saw thousands of fireflies, which looked like seeds fallen from the stars.

"Oh, what a setting for a love scene!" I exclaimed.

She smiled.

"Is it not true? Is it not true? You will see!"

And she made me sit down beside her.

"This is what makes one long for more life. But you hardly think of these things, you men of to-day. You are speculators, merchants and men of affairs.

You no longer even know how to talk to us. When I say 'you,' I mean young men in general. Love has been turned into a liaison which very often begins with an unpaid dressmaker's bill. If you think the bill is dearer than the woman, you disappear; but if you hold the woman more highly, you pay it. Nice morals—and a nice kind of love!"

She took my hand.

"Look!"

I looked, astonished and delighted. Down there at the end of the avenue, in the moonlight, were two young people, with their arms around each other's waist. They were walking along, interlaced, charming, with short, little steps, crossing the flakes of light, which illuminated them momentarily, and then sinking back into the shadow. The youth was dressed in a suit of white satin, such as men wore in the eighteenth century, and had on a hat with an ostrich plume. The girl was arrayed in a gown with *panniers,* and the high, powdered coiffure of the handsome dames of the time of the Regency.

They stopped a hundred paces from us, and standing in the middle of the avenue, they kissed each other with graceful gestures.

Suddenly I recognized the two little servants. Then one of those dreadful fits of laughter that convulse you made me writhe in my chair. But I did not laugh aloud. I resisted, convulsed and feeling almost ill, as a man whose leg is cut off resists the impulse to cry out.

As the young pair turned toward the farther end of the avenue they again became delightful. They went farther and farther away, finally disappearing

as a dream disappears. I no longer saw them. The avenue seemed a sad place.

I took my leave at once, so as not to see them again, for I guessed that this little play would last a long time, awakening, as it did, a whole past of love and of stage scenery; the artificial past, deceitful and seductive, false but charming, which still stirred the heart of this amorous old commédienne.

ON THE JOURNEY

ON leaving Cannes the carriage was full, and as all were acquainted, we entered into conversation. As we passed Tarascon some one said: "It is here the murders happen." And we began to talk of that mysterious assassin who has never been caught, and who from time to time during the last two years has undertaken to kill some traveller. Every one hazarded suppositions, every one gave his opinion. The women trembled as they looked through the windows at the dark night, fearing to see the head of a man show suddenly at the door of the carriage. We began to tell gruesome stories of terrible adventures of some *tête-à-tête* with a madman in an express, of hours passed opposite suspicious-looking persons, quite alone.

All the men had intimidated, knocked down and choked some malefactor under remarkable circumstances, with admirable boldness and presence of mind. A physician, who passed each winter in the South, wished in his turn to tell a tale.

"I," said he, "never have had the chance to try my courage in an affair of that sort, but I knew a woman, one of my patients who is now dead, to whom there happened the strangest thing in the world and also the most weird and the most affecting.

"She was a Russian, the Comtesse Marie Bara-

now, a very great lady of exquisite beauty. We all know how beautiful the Russian women are, or at least how beautiful they seem to us, with their thin nostrils, their delicate mouths, their close-set eyes of an indefinite shade—a sort of blue-gray—and with that grace of theirs which is cold and a little hard. They have about them something naughty and seductive, something haughty and gentle, something tender and severe, which is very alluring to a Frenchman. It is perhaps, however, only the difference of race and type which makes me see so much.

"For several years her doctor had noticed that she was threatened with lung trouble and had been trying to induce her to go to the south of France, but she obstinately refused to leave St. Petersburg. Finally, last autumn, the physician gave her up as lost, and so informed her husband, who at once ordered his wife to leave for Mentone.

"She took the train, alone in her carriage, her servants occupying another compartment. She leaned against the doorway, a little sad, looking at the country and the passing villages, feeling herself isolated in life, abandoned, without children, almost without relatives, with a husband whose love was dead, and who, instead of coming with her, had just sent her off to the end of the world as he would send to the hospital a valet who was sick.

"At every station her man servant Ivan came to see if his mistress wanted anything. He was an old servant, blindly devoted, ready to carry out any order which she might give.

"The night fell, the train rolled onward at full speed. Her nerves were unstrung, she could not sleep. Suddenly she began counting the money

which her husband had given her at the last moment. She opened her little bag and emptied the shining pieces of gold upon her knees.

"But all of a sudden a breath of cold air struck her in the face. She raised her head in surprise. The door had just swung open. The Comtesse Marie, at her wits' end, brusquely threw a shawl over the money which was spread upon her knees and waited. Some seconds passed, then a man appeared, bareheaded, wounded in the hand, breathing hard and in evening dress. He shut the door again, sat down, stared at his neighbor with glittering eyes, then wrapped a handkerchief round his wrist, from which the blood was flowing.

"The young countess felt herself grow weak with fright. This man had certainly seen her counting her gold, and he was come to murder and rob her.

"He kept staring at her, breathless, his face convulsed, ready no doubt to spring at her.

"He said suddenly:

" 'Have no fear, madame!'

"She answered nothing. She was unable to open her mouth, hearing her heart beat and her ears hum.

"He continued:

" 'I am not a criminal, madame.'

"She still said nothing, but in a brusque movement which she made her knees came close together, and her gold began to flow down upon the carpet as water flows from a gutter.

"The man, surprised, looked at this rivulet of metal, and suddenly he stooped to pick up the money.

"She rose in a mad fright, casting all her treasure to the ground, and ran to the door to throw herself out upon the track. But he understood what she

was about to do, rushed forward, caught her in his arms, made her sit down by force, and holding her wrists, said: "Listen, madame, I am not a criminal, and the proof is that I am going to pick up this money and give it back to you. I am a lost man, a dead man, unless you help me to cross the frontier. I cannot tell you more. In one hour we shall be at the last Russian station; in one hour and twenty minutes we shall pass the boundary of the empire. If you do not rescue me I am lost. And yet, madame, I have neither killed nor stolen nor done anything against my honor. I swear it to you. I cannot tell you more.'

"And getting down on his knees, he picked up the gold, looking even for the pieces which had rolled under the seats. Then, when the little leather bag was once more full, he returned it to her without adding a word, and sat in the other corner of the carriage.

"They no longer stirred, either one or the other. She remained motionless and dumb, still ready to faint with terror, then little by little growing more at ease. As for him, he did not make a movement; he sat straight, his eyes fixed before him, very pale, as though he were dead. From time to time she looked at him suddenly and as quickly looked away. He was a man about thirty, very handsome, with every appearance of a gentleman.

"The tran ran through the darkness, cast rending cries across the night, sometimes slackened its pace, then went off again at full speed. But suddenly it slowed up, whistled several times and stopped.

"Ivan appeared at the door to get his orders.

"The Comtesse Marie, with a trembling voice,

gave one more look at her strange companion, then said to her servant abruptly:

"'Ivan, you are to return to the count; I have no more need of you.'

"The man, speechless, opened his enormous eyes. He stammered:

"'But—barine!'

"She added:

"'No, you are not to come; I have changed my mind. I want you to remain in Russia. Here is money to return. Give me your cap and your cloak.'

"The old servant, quite overcome, bared his head and held out his cloak. He always obeyed without reply, being well accustomed to the sudden wishes and the irresistible caprices of his employers. And he withdrew, with tears in his eyes.

"The train went on, running towards the frontier.

"Then the Comtesse Marie said to her neighbor:

"'These things are for you, monsieur; you are Ivan, my servant. I add only one condition to what I do: it is that you shall never speak to me, that you must not address me, either to thank me or for any purpose whatever.'

"The unknown bowed without uttering a word.

"Very soon they came to a stop once more, and officials in uniform visited the train. The countess offered them her papers, and pointing to the man seated at the back of the carriage:

"'My servant, Ivan. Here is his passport.'

"The train went on.

"During the whole night they remained *tête-à-tête,* both silent.

"In the morning, when they stopped at a German

station, the unknown got down. Then, standing straight in the doorway:

"'Forgive my breaking my promise, madame, but I have deprived you of your servant; it is right that I should fill his place. Have you need of anything?'

"She answered coldly:

"'Go and find my maid.'

"He went to do so, then disappeared.

"When she got out of the carriage at a restaurant, she perceived him from a distance looking at her. They reached Mentone."

The doctor was silent a second, then resumed:

"One day, as I was receiving my patients in my office, I saw a tall young fellow come in and he said to me:

"'Doctor, I am here to ask news of the Comtesse Marie Baranow. I am, although she does not know me, a friend of her husband.'

"I replied:

"'She is doomed. She will never go back to Russia.'

"The man suddenly began to sob. Then he got up and went out, reeling like a drunkard.

"That night I told the comtesse that a stranger had come to inquire from me about her health. She seemed moved and told me all the story which I have just told you. She added:

"'That man, whom I do not know at all, now shadows me. I meet him every time I go out; he looks at me in a strange fashion, but he has never spoken.'

"She paused, then continued:

"'See, I would wager he is under my windows.'

"She left her easy-chair, went to pull back the curtains, and, sure enough, she pointed out the man who had called to see me, now seated there on a bench upon the promenade, his eyes raised toward the hotel. He recognized us, rose and went off without once turning his head.

"From that time foreward I witnessed an unusual and sorrowful thing—the silent love of these two beings, who did not even know one another.

"He loved her with the affection of a rescued animal, who is grateful and devoted until death. He came each day to say to me: 'How is she?' understanding that I had divined the secret. And he cried when he had seen her pass each day feebler and paler.

"She said to me:

" 'I have spoken but a single time to that strange man, and it seems to me as if I had known him for twenty years.'

"When they met, she would return his bow with a grave and charming smile. I could see that she was happy—she so alone and knowing herself doomed—I could see that she was happy to be loved like this, with such respect and such constancy in this sentimental manner, with this devotion which was ready for all things. And, notwithstanding, faithful to her high-flown resolve, she obstinately refused to receive him, to know his name, to speak with him. She said: 'No, no, that would spoil for me this curious friendship. We must remain strangers to one another.'

"As for him, he also was certainly a kind of Don Quixote, because he made no attempt to approach her. He meant to keep the absurd promise of never

speaking, which he had made her in the railway carriage.

"Often, during her weary hours of weakness, she rose from her long chair and went to open the curtains a little way to see if he was there, beneath her window. When she had seen him, always motionless upon his bench, she went back and lay down with a smile upon her lips.

"She died one day about ten o'clock. As I was leaving the hotel he came up to me with a distracted face; he had already heard the news.

" 'I should like to see her, for one second, in your presence,' said he.

"I took him by the arm and went back into the house.

"When he was beside the couch of the dead woman he seized her hand and kissed it long and tenderly and then fled away like a madman."

The doctor again was silent, then continued:

"This is certainly the strangest railway adventure that I know. It must also be said that men sometimes take the wildest freaks."

A woman murmured, half aloud:

"Those two people were not so crazy as you think. They were—they were——"

But she could not continue, she was crying so. As we changed the conversation to calm her, we never knew what she had wished to say.

CHECKMATE

I WAS going to Turin by way of Corsica. At Nice I took the boat for Bastia, and as soon as we were started I noticed a rather pretty, modest-looking young woman seated on the deck. She was looking away into the distance with a far-away expression in her eyes.

I seated myself opposite her and looked at her, asking myself the questions which come to one's mind on seeing an unknown woman who interests you: What was her condition, her age, her disposition? Then through what you see you guess what you do not know. With your eyes you notice the length of the waist when she is seated, you try to discover her ankle, you observe the quality of the hand, which reveals the refinement of all one's affections, and the ear, which indicates origin better than a birth certificate. You try to hear her speak in order to understand the nature of her mind and the tendencies of her heart through the intonations of her voice. For the quality of the voice and the choice of words unfold to an experienced observer the whole mysterious texture of the soul.

I was therefore attentively observing my neighbor, looking for signs, analyzing gestures, expecting a revelation at every minute.

She opened a little bag and drew out a news-

paper. I rubbed my hands. "Tell me what you read, and I will tell you what you think."

She began to read with a look of pleasure and of relish. The title of the sheet was the *Echo de Paris.* I was perplexed. She was reading an article by Scholl. Was she a Schollist? She began to smile. Was she one of his opponents? It was difficult to make her out.

I sat down beside her and began to read, with no less attention, a volume of poetry which I had bought before leaving, the "Song of Love," by Felix Frank.

I noticed that she took in the title with a rapid glance, just as a flying bird snatches up a fly. Several of the passengers passed by in order to look at her. But she seemed only to be thinking of her article. When she had finished it, she laid the paper down between us.

Bowing, I said to her:

"Madame, may I glance at this paper?"

"Certainly, sir."

"In the meanwhile, allow me to offer you this volume of verse."

"Thank you, sir; is it amusing?"

I was a little disturbed at this question. One does not ask if a volume of poetry is amusing. I answered:

"It is better than that, it is charming, delicate and very artistic."

"Then let me see it."

She took the volume, opened it and began to glance through it with a little surprised air which showed that she was not in the habit of reading poetry.

At times she seemed moved; at others, she smiled, but with a different smile from the one she had when reading the newspaper.

Suddenly I asked her: "Does it please you?"

"Yes, but I like things that are cheerful, very cheerful. I am not at all sentimental."

We began to talk. I found out that she was the wife of a captain of dragoons, stationed at Ajaccio, and that she was going to join her husband.

In a few minutes I guessed that she did not love him very much. She loved him, however, but with reserve, as one loves a man who has not lived up to what was expected of him before marriage. He had taken her from garrison to garrison, through a lot of dreadful little towns. Now he was calling her to this dismal island. No, life was not amusing for everybody. She would even have preferred remaining with her parents in Lyons, for there she knew everybody. But now she had to go to Corsica. Really, the Secretary of War was not at all nice to her husband, who had deserved well of the government.

We spoke of the places in which she would have preferred to live, and I asked:

"Do you like Paris?"

She exclaimed:

"Oh! monsieur, do I like Paris? Is it possible to ask such a question?" And she began to talk to me of Paris with such ardor, such enthusiasm, such envy, that I thought to myself: "That's the string to play on."

She adored Paris from a distance with the exasperated passion of a woman from the country, with the wild impatience of a captive bird which is watch-

ing a forest all day from the window in which his cage is hung.

She began to question me hurriedly; she wished to learn everything in five minutes. She knew the names of all the well-known people, and of many others of whom I had never heard.

"How is M. Gounod? And M. Sardou? Oh! monsieur, I do so love Sardou's plays! They are so bright and witty! Each time I see one of them I dream of it for a week! I also read one of M. Daudet's books, which pleased me so much! 'Sapho,' do you know it? Is M. Daudet handsome? Have you seen him? And M. Zola, what kind of a man is he? If you knew how 'Germinal' made me cry! Do you remember where the little child dies in the darkness? Isn't it terrible? I was almost sick after reading it! Really! I also read a book by M. Bourget, 'Cruelle énigme.' I have a girl cousin who went so wild about that novel that she wrote to M. Bourget. I found that book too poetic. I prefer humorous things. Do you know M. Grévin? And M. Coquelin? And M. Damala? And M. Rochefort? They say he is so witty! And M. de Cassagnac? I heard that he has a duel every day!"

* * * * * *

After about an hour, this rapid-fire questioning began to slow down; and having satisfied her curiosity to the full extent of my fantastical imagination, I was at liberty to pick my own subjects of conversation.

I told her stories of gay Parisian life. She drank them in with both eyes and ears. She must certainly have conceived a strange idea of the great, well-known ladies of Paris. They were all stories of

clandestine appointments, rapid conquests and sad separations. From time to time she would ask me:

"Oh! is that the way they live?"

I answered with a sly smile:

"Of course the average middle-class families lead an uneventful, monotonous life, out of respect for virtue, a virtue for which no one gives them credit."

I began to sneer at virtue. I talked carelessly of the poor fools who go through life without ever having known the good, sweet things, without ever having tasted the delicious pleasures of stolen kisses, because they have married some stick of a husband whose marital modesty has allowed them to spend their lives in total ignorance of refined and delicate sentiment.

Then I began to tell her anecdotes, stories of little private dinners, of intrigues which I claimed were known the world over. The refrain was always the same, it was always discreet, veiled praise of sudden and secret love, of the sensation stolen like a fruit, while passing by, and forgotten as soon as it is over.

Night came on, calm and warm. The great vessel, vibrating under the impulse of its machinery, was gliding over the seas, beneath the immense arch of the violet sky studded with stars.

The little woman was silent. She was breathing slowly and sometimes sighing. Suddenly she arose:

"I am going to bed," she said; "good night, monsieur."

She shook hands with me.

I knew that she expected the following evening

to take the coach which goes from Bastia to Ajaccio through the mountains, travelling all night.

I answered:

"Good night, madame."

I then went to my cabin.

The next morning, early, I reserved all three seats in the coach for myself, alone.

At nightfall, as I was climbing into the old wagon which was about to leave Bastia, the driver asked me if I would be willing to give up one seat to a lady. I asked gruffly:

"To what lady?"

"To an officer's wife who is going to Ajaccio."

"Tell this person that I will willingly give her a seat."

She arrived, having spent the day sleeping, she said. She excused herself, thanked me and climbed in.

This wagon was a kind of hermetically sealed box, getting no light except through its two doors. There we were, face to face in the interior. The horses went at a lively trot; then we got into the mountains. A fresh and penetrating odor of aromatic herbs drifted in through the open windows, that strong fragrance which Corsica spreads around itself to such a distance that the sailors can recognize it at sea, so subtle that it cannot be analyzed. I started once more to speak of Paris, and she listened to me again with feverish attention. My stories became bolder and full of those veiled double-ententes which stir the blood.

Night had fallen completely. I could no longer see anything, not even the white spot which, a minute ago, the young woman's face made in the

darkness. The driver's lantern, alone, lighted the four horses, which were slowly climbing the ascent.

From time to time the sound of a mountain torrent, rushing through the rocks, came to us mingled with the noise of the bells on the horses, then it was soon lost in the distance behind us.

Slowly I advanced my foot and met hers, which she did not remove. Then I kept still, I was waiting, and suddenly I began to talk of tenderness, of affection. I had put out my hand and met hers. She did not remove that either. I kept on talking, nearer to her ear, very close to her mouth. I already felt her heart beating against my breast. It was beating fast and strong—good sign; then, slowly, I placed my lips on her neck, sure that I held her, so sure that I would have staked my life on it.

But, suddenly, she gave a start, as though she had just waked up, such a start that I flew over to the other side of the carriage. Then, before I had had time to understand, to think, to reflect, I received first five or six terrible slaps in the face, and then a shower of blows from her clenched fist, which came hard and heavy, hitting me everywhere, without my being able to ward them off in the dense darkness by which we were surrounded.

I stretched out my hands, trying vainly to seize her arms. Then, no longer knowing what to do, I turned round quickly, presenting to her furious attack only my back, and hiding my head in a corner of the cushioned seat.

She seemed to understand, perhaps by the sound of the blows, this ruse of a desperate man, and she stopped hitting me.

"What makes you think that? On the contrary, I think she looks most respectable."

"Just look at her bracelets," I said, "her earrings and her whole dress. I should not be the least surprised if she were a dancer or a circus rider, but most likely a dancer. Her whole style smacks very much of the theatre."

He evidently did not like the idea.

"She is much too young, I am sure; why, she is hardly twenty."

"Well," I replied, "there are many things which one can do before one is twenty; dancing and elocution are among them."

"Take your seats for Nice, Vintimiglia," the guards and porters called.

We got in; our fellow passenger was eating an orange, and certainly she did not do it elegantly. She had spread her pocket-handkerchief on her knees, and the way in which she tore off the peel and opened her mouth to put in the pieces, and then spat the pips out of the window, showed that her training had been decidedly vulgar.

She seemed, also, more put out than ever, and swallowed the fruit with an exceedingly comic air of rage.

Paul devoured her with his eyes, and tried to attract her attention and excite her curiosity; but in spite of his talk, and of the manner in which he brought in well-known names, she did not pay the least attention to him.

After passing Fréjus and St. Raphael, the train passed through a veritable garden, a paradise of roses, and groves of oranges and lemons covered with fruits and flowers at the same time. That de-

lightful coast from Marseilles to Genoa is a kingdom of perfumes in a home of flowers.

June is the time to see it in all its beauty, when in every narrow valley and on every slope, the most exquisite flowers are growing luxuriantly. And the roses! fields, hedges, groves of roses. They climb up the walls, blossom on the roofs, hang from the trees, peep out from among the bushes; they are white, red, yellow, large and small, single, with a simple self-colored dress, or full and heavy in brilliant toilettes.

Their breath makes the air heavy and relaxing, and the still more penetrating odor of the orange blossoms sweetens the atmosphere till it might almost be called the refinement of odor.

The shore, with its brown rocks, was bathed by the motionless Mediterranean. The hot summer sun stretched like a fiery cloth over the mountains, over the long expanses of sand, and over the motionless, apparently solid blue sea. The train went on through the tunnels, along the slopes, above the water, on straight, wall-like viaducts, and a soft, vague, saltish smell, a smell of drying seaweed, mingled at times with the strong, heavy perfume of the flowers.

But Paul neither saw, looked at, nor smelled anything, for our fellow traveller engrossed all his attention.

When we reached Cannes, as he wished to speak to me he signed to me to get out, and as soon as I did so, he took me by the arm.

"Do you know, she is really charming. Just look at her eyes; and I never saw anything like her hair."

"Don't excite yourself," I replied, "or else address her, if you have any intentions that way. She does not look unapproachable, I fancy, although she appears to be a little bit grumpy."

"Why don't you speak to her?" he said.

"I don't know what to say, for I am always terribly stupid at first; I can never make advances to a woman in the street. I follow them, go round and round them, and quite close to them, but never know what to say at first. I only once tried to enter into conversation with a woman in that way. As I clearly saw that she was waiting for me to make overtures, and as I felt bound to say something, I stammered out, 'I hope you are quite well, madame?' She laughed in my face, and I made my escape."

I promised Paul to do all I could to bring about a conversation, and when we had taken our places again, I politely asked our neighbor:

"Have you any objection to the smell of tobacco, madame?"

She merely replied, *"Non capisco."*

So she was an Italian! I felt an absurd inclination to laugh. As Paul did not understand a word of that language, I was obliged to act as his interpreter, so I said in Italian:

"I asked you, madame, whether you had any objection to tobacco smoke?"

With an angry look she replied, *"Che mi fa!"*

She had neither turned her head nor looked at me, and I really did not know whether to take this "What do I care" for an authorization, a refusal, a real sign of indifference, or for a mere "Let me alone."

"Madame," I replied, "if you mind the smell of tobacco in the least——"

She again said, *"Mica,"* in a tone which seemed to mean, "I wish to goodness you would leave me alone!" It was, however, a kind of permission, so I said to Paul:

"You may smoke."

He looked at me in that curious sort of way that people have when they try to understand others who are talking in a strange language before them, and asked me:

"What did you say to her?"

"I asked whether we might smoke, and she said we might do whatever we liked."

Whereupon I lighted my cigar.

"Did she say anything more?"

"If you had counted her words you would have noticed that she used exactly six, two of which gave me to understand that she knew no French, so four remained, and much can be said in four words."

Paul seemed quite unhappy, disappointed, and at sea, so to speak.

But suddenly the Italian asked me, in that tone of discontent which seemed habitual to her, "Do you know at what time we shall get to Genoa?"

"At eleven o'clock," I replied. Then after a moment I went on:

"My friend and I are also going to Genoa, and if we can be of any service to you, we shall be very happy, as you are quite alone." But she interrupted with such a *"Mica!"* that I did not venture on another word.

"What did she say?" Paul asked.

"She said she thought you were charming."

But he was in no humor for joking, and begged me dryly not to make fun of him; so I translated her question and my polite offer, which had been so rudely rejected.

Then he really became as restless as a caged squirrel.

"If we only knew," he said, "what hotel she was going to, we would go to the same. Try to find out, so as to have another opportunity to make her talk."

It was not particularly easy, and I did not know what pretext to invent, desirous as I was to make the acquaintance of this unapproachable person.

We passed Nice, Monaco, Mentone, and the train stopped at the frontier for the examination of luggage.

Although I hate those ill-bred people who breakfast and dine in railway-carriages, I went and bought a quantity of good things to make one last attack on her by their means. I felt sure that this girl must, ordinarily, be by no means inaccessible. Something had put her out and made her irritable, but very little would suffice, a mere word or some agreeable offer, to decide her and vanquish her.

We started again, and we three were still alone. I spread my eatables on the seat. I cut up the fowl, put the slices of ham neatly on a piece of paper, and then carefully laid out our dessert, strawberries, plums, cherries and cakes, close to the girl.

When she saw that we were about to eat she took a piece of chocolate and two little crisp cakes out of her pocket and began to munch them.

"Ask her to have some of ours," Paul said in a whisper.

"That is exactly what I wish to do, but it is rather a difficult matter."

As she, however, glanced from time to time at our provisions, I felt sure that she would still be hungry when she had finished what she had with her; so, as soon as her frugal meal was over, I said to her:

"It would be very kind of you if you would take some of this fruit."

Again she said *"Mica!"* but less crossly than before.

"Well, then," I said, "may I offer you a little wine? I see you have not drunk anything. It is Italian wine, and as we are now in your own country, we should be very pleased to see such a pretty Italian mouth accept the offer of its French neighbors."

She shook her head slightly, evidently wishing to refuse, but very desirous of accepting, and her *mica* this time was almost polite. I took the flask, which was covered with straw in the Italian fashion, and filling the glass, I offered it to her.

"Please drink it," I said, "to bid us welcome to your country."

She took the glass with her usual look, and emptied it at a draught, like a woman consumed with thirst, and then gave it back to me without even saying "Thank you."

I then offered her the cherries. "Please take some," I said; "we shall be so glad if you will."

Out of her corner she looked at all the fruit spread out beside her, and said so rapidly that I could scarcely follow her: *"A me non piacciono ne le ciriegie ne le susine; amo soltano le fragole."*

"What does she say?" Paul asked.

"That she does not care for cherries or plums, but only for strawberries."

I put a newspaper full of wild strawberries on her lap, and she ate them quickly, tossing them into her mouth from some distance in a coquettish and charming manner.

When she had finished the little red heap, which soon disappeared under the rapid action of her hands, I asked her:

"What may I offer you now?"

"I will take a little chicken," she replied.

She certainly devoured half of it, tearing it to pieces with the rapid movements of her jaws like some carnivorous animal. Then she made up her mind to have some cherries, which she "did not like," and then some plums, then some little cakes. Then she said, "I have had enough," and sat back in her corner.

I was much amused, and tried to make her eat more, insisting, in fact, till she suddenly flew into a rage, and flung such a furious *mica* at me, that I would no longer run the risk of spoiling her digestion.

I turned to my friend. "My poor Paul," I said, "I am afraid we have had our trouble for nothing."

The night came on, one of those hot summer nights which extend their warm shade over the burning and exhausted earth. Here and there, in the distance, by the sea, on capes and promontories, bright stars, which I was, at times, almost inclined to confound with lighthouses, began to shine on the dark horizon.

The scent of the orange trees became more penetrating, and we breathed with delight, distending

our lungs to inhale it more deeply. The balmy air was soft, delicious, almost divine.

Suddenly I noticed something like a shower of stars under the dense shade of the trees along the line, where it was quite dark. It might have been taken for drops of light, leaping, flying, playing and running among the leaves, or for small stars fallen from the skies in order to have an excursion on the earth; but they were only fireflies dancing a strange fiery ballet in the perfumed air.

One of them happened to come into our carriage, and shed its intermittent light, which seemed to be extinguished one moment and to be burning the next. I covered the carriage-lamp with its blue shade and watched the strange fly careering about in its fiery flight. Suddenly it settled on the dark hair of our neighbor, who was half dozing after dinner. Paul seemed delighted, with his eyes fixed on the bright, sparkling spot, which looked like a living jewel on the forehead of the sleeping woman.

The Italian woke up about eleven o'clock, with the bright insect still in her hair. When I saw her move, I said: "We are just getting to Genoa, madame," and she murmured, without answering me, as if possessed by some obstinate and embarrassing thought:

"What am I going to do, I wonder?"

And then she suddenly asked:

"Would you like me to come with you?"

I was so taken aback that I really did not understand her.

"With us? How do you mean?"

She repeated, looking more and more furious:

"Would you like me to be your guide now, as soon as we get out of the train?"

"I am quite willing; but where do you want to go?"

She shrugged her shoulders with an air of supreme indifference.

"Wherever you like; what does it matter to me?" She repeated her *"Che mi fa?"* twice.

"But we are going to the hotel."

"Very well, let us all go to the hotel," she said, in a contemptuous voice.

I turned to Paul, and said:

"She wishes to know whether we should like her to come with us."

My friend's utter surprise restored my self-possession. He stammered:

"With us? Where to? What for? How?"

"I don't know, but she made this strange proposal to me in a most irritated voice. I told her that we were going to the hotel, and she said: 'Very well, let us all go there!' I suppose she is without a penny. She certainly has a very strange way of making acquaintances."

Paul, who was very much excited, exclaimed:

"I am quite agreeable. Tell her that we will go wherever she likes." Then, after a moment's hesitation, he said uneasily:

"We must know, however, with whom she wishes to go—with you or with me?"

I turned to the Italian, who did not even seem to be listening to us, and said:

"We shall be very happy to have you with us, but my friend wishes to know whether you will take my arm or his?"

She opened her black eyes wide with vague surprise, and said, *"Che mi fa?"*

I was obliged to explain myself. "In Italy, I believe, when a man looks after a woman, fulfils all her wishes, and satisfies all her caprices, he is called a *patito*. Which of us two will you take for your *patito?"*

Without the slightest hesitation she replied:

"You!"

I turned to Paul. "You see, my friend, she chooses me; you have no chance."

"All the better for you," he replied in a rage. Then, after thinking for a few moments, he went on:

"Do you really care about taking this creature with you? She will spoil our journey. What are we to do with this woman, who looks like I don't know what? They will not take us in at any decent hotel."

I, however, just began to find the Italian much nicer than I had thought her at first, and I was now very desirous to take her with us. The idea delighted me.

I replied, "My dear fellow, we have accepted, and it is too late to recede. You were the first to advise me to say 'Yes.'"

"It is very stupid," he growled, "but do as you please."

The train whistled, slackened speed, and we ran into the station.

I got out of the carriage, and offered my new companion my hand. She jumped out lightly, and I gave her my arm, which she took with an air of seeming repugnance. As soon as we had claimed

our luggage we set off into the town, Paul walking in utter silence.

"To what hotel shall we go?" I asked him. "It may be difficult to get into the City of Paris with a woman, especially with this Italian."

Paul interrupted me. "Yes, with an Italian who looks more like a dancer than a duchess. However, that is no business of mine. Do just as you please."

I was in a state of perplexity. I had written to the City of Paris to retain our rooms, and now I did not know what to do.

Two commissionaires followed us with our luggage. I continued: "You might as well go on first, and say that we are coming; and give the landlord to understand that I have a—a friend with me and that we should like rooms quite by themselves for us three, so as not to be brought in contact with other travellers. He will understand, and we will decide according to his answer."

But Paul growled, "Thank you, such commissions and such parts do not suit me, by any means. I did not come here to select your apartments or to minister to your pleasures."

But I was urgent: "Look here, don't be angry. It is surely far better to go to a good hotel than to a bad one, and it is not difficult to ask the landlord for three separate bedrooms and a dining-room."

I put a stress on *three*, and that decided him.

He went on first, and I saw him go into a large hotel while I remained on the other side of the street, with my fair Italian, who did not say a word, and followed the porters with the luggage.

Paul came back at last, looking as dissatisfied as my companion.

"That is settled," he said, "and they will take us in; but here are only two bedrooms. You must settle it as you can."

I followed him, rather ashamed of going in with such a strange companion.

There were two bedrooms separated by a small sitting-room. I ordered a cold supper, and then I turned to the Italian with a perplexed look.

"We have only been able to get two rooms, so you must choose which you like."

She replied with her eternal *"Che mi fa!"* I thereupon took up her little black wooden trunk, such as servants use, and took it into the room on the right, which I had chosen for her. A bit of paper was fastened to the box, on which was written, *Mademoiselle Francesca Rondoli, Genoa.*

"Your name is Francesca?" I asked, and she nodded her head, without replying.

"We shall have supper directly," I continued. "Meanwhile, I dare say you would like to arrange your toilette a little?"

She answered with a *mica,* a word which she employed just as frequently as *Che mi fa,* but I went on: "It is always pleasant after a journey."

Then I suddenly remembered that she had not, perhaps, the necessary requisites, for she appeared to me in a very singular position, as if she had just escaped from some disagreeable adventure, and I brought her my dressing-case.

I put out all the little instruments for cleanliness and comfort which it contained: a nail-brush, a new toothbrush—I always carry a selection of them about with me—my nail-scissors, a nail-file, and sponges. I uncorked a bottle of eau de cologne, one

of lavender-water, and a little bottle of new-mown hay, so that she might have a choice. Then I opened my powder-box, and put out the powder-puff, placed my fine towels over the water-jug, and a piece of new soap near the basin.

She watched my movements with a look of annoyance in her wide-open eyes, without appearing either astonished or pleased at my forethought.

"Here is all that you require," I then said; "I will tell you when supper is ready."

When I returned to the sitting-room I found that Paul had shut himself in the other room, so I sat down to wait.

A waiter went to and fro, bringing plates and glasses. He laid the table slowly, then put a cold chicken on it, and told me that all was ready.

I knocked gently at Mademoiselle Rondoli's door. "Come in," she said, and when I did so I was struck by a strong, heavy smell of perfumes, as if I were in a hairdresser's shop.

The Italian was sitting on her trunk in an attitude either of thoughtful discontent or absent-mindedness. The towel was still folded over the water-jug that was full of water, and the soap, untouched and dry, was lying beside the empty basin; but one would have thought that the young woman had used half the contents of the bottles of perfume. The eau de cologne, however, had been spared, as only about a third of it had gone; but to make up for that she had used a surprising amount of lavender-water and new-mown hay. A cloud of violet-powder, a vague white mist, seemed still to be floating in the air, from the effects of her over-powdering her face and neck. It seemed to cover her eye-

lashes, eyebrows, and the hair on her temples like snow, while her cheeks were plastered with it, and layers of it covered her nostrils, the corners of her eyes, and her chin.

When she got up she exhaled such a strong odor of perfume that it almost made me feel faint.

When we sat down to supper, I found that Paul was in a most execrable temper, and I could get nothing out of him but blame, irritable words, and disagreeable remarks.

Mademoiselle Francesca ate like an ogre, and as soon as she had finished her meal she threw herself upon the sofa in the sitting-room. Sitting down beside her, I said gallantly, kissing her hand:

"Shall I have the bed prepared, or will you sleep on the couch?"

"It is all the same to me. *Che mi fa!*"

Her indifference vexed me.

"Should you like to retire at once?"

"Yes; I am very sleepy."

She got up, yawned, gave her hand to Paul, who took it with a furious look, and I lighted her into the bedroom. A disquieting feeling haunted me. "Here is all you want," I said again.

The next morning she got up early, like a woman who is accustomed to work. She woke me by doing so, and I watched her through my half-closed eyelids.

She came and went without hurrying herself, as if she were astonished at having nothing to do. At length she went to the dressing-table, and in a moment emptied all my bottles of perfume. She certainly also used some water, but very little.

When she was quite dressed, she sat down on her

trunk again, and clasping one knee between her hands, she seemed to be thinking.

At that moment I pretended to first notice her, and said:

"Good-morning, Francesca."

Without seeming in at all a better temper than the previous night, she murmured, "Good-morning."

When I asked her whether she had slept well, she nodded her head, and jumping out of bed, I went and kissed her.

She turned her face toward me like a child who is being kissed against its will; but I took her tenderly in my arms, and gently pressed my lips on her eyelids, which she closed with evident distaste under my kisses on her fresh cheek and full lips, which she turned away.

"You don't seem to like being kissed," I said to her.

"Mica!" was her only answer.

I sat down on the trunk by her side, and passing my arm through hers, I said: *"Mica! mica! mica!* in reply to everything. I shall call you Mademoiselle *Mica,* I think."

For the first time I fancied that I saw the shadow of a smile on her lips, but it passed by so quickly that I may have been mistaken.

"But if you never say anything but *Mica,* I shall not know what to do to please you. Let me see; what shall we do to-day?"

She hesitated a moment, as if some fancy had flitted through her head, and then she said carelessly: "It is all the same to me; whatever you like."

"Very well, Mademoiselle *Mica,* we will have a carriage and go for a drive."

"As you please," she said.

Paul was waiting for us in the dining-room, looking as bored as third parties usually do in love affairs. I assumed a delighted air, and shook hands with him with triumphant energy.

"What are you thinking of doing?" he asked.

"First of all, we will go and see a little of the town, and then we might get a carriage and take a drive in the neighborhood."

We breakfasted almost in silence, and then set out. I dragged Francesca from palace to palace, and she either looked at nothing or merely glanced carelessly at the various masterpieces. Paul followed us, growling all sorts of disagreeable things. Then we all three took a drive in silence into the country and returned to dinner.

The next day it was the same thing and the next day again; and on the third Paul said to me: "Look here, I am going to leave you; I am not going to stop here for three weeks watching you make love to this creature."

I was perplexed and annoyed, for to my great surprise I had become singularly attached to Francesca. A man is but weak and foolish, carried away by the merest trifle, and a coward every time that his senses are excited or mastered. I clung to this unknown girl, silent and dissatisfied as she always was. I liked her somewhat ill-tempered face, the dissatisfied droop of her mouth, the weariness of her look; I liked her fatigued movements, the contemptuous way in which she let me kiss her, the very indifference of her caresses. A secret bond, that

mysterious bond of physical love, which does not satisfy, bound me to her. I told Paul so, quite frankly. He treated me as if I were a fool, and then said:

"Very well, take her with you."

But she obstinately refused to leave Genoa, without giving any reason. I besought, I reasoned, I promised, but all was of no avail, and so I stayed on.

Paul declared that he would go by himself, and went so far as to pack up his portmanteau; but he remained all the same.

Thus a fortnight passed. Francesca was always silent and irritable, lived beside me rather than with me, responded to all my requirements and all my propositions with her perpetual *Che mi fa,* or with her no less perpetual *Mica.*

My friend became more and more furious, but my only answer was, "You can go if you are tired of staying. I am not detaining you."

Then he called me names, overwhelmed me with reproaches, and exclaimed: "Where do you think I can go now? We had three weeks at our disposal, and here is a fortnight gone! I cannot continue my journey now; and, in any case, I am not going to Venice, Florence and Rome all by myself. But you will pay for it, and more dearly than you think, most likely. You are not going to bring a man all the way from Paris in order to shut him up at a hotel in Genoa with an Italian adventuress."

When I told him, very calmly, to return to Paris, he exclaimed that he intended to do so the very next day; but the next day he was still there, still in a rage and swearing.

By this time we began to be known in the streets

through which we wandered from morning till night. Sometimes French people would turn round astonished at meeting their fellow-countrymen in the company of this girl with her striking costume, who looked singularly out of place, not to say compromising, beside us.

She used to walk along, leaning on my arm, without looking at anything. Why did she remain with me, with us, who seemed to do so little to amuse her? Who was she? Where did she come from? What was she doing? Had she any plan or idea? Where did she live? As an adventuress, or by chance meetings? I tried in vain to find out and to explain it. The better I knew her the more enigmatical she became. She seemed to be a girl of poor family who had been taken away, and then cast aside and lost. What did she think would become of her, or whom was she waiting for? She certainly did not appear to be trying to make a conquest of me, or to make any real profit out of me.

I tried to question her, to speak to her of her childhood and family; but she never gave me an answer. I stayed with her, my heart unfettered and my senses enchained, never wearied of holding her in my arms, that proud and quarrelsome woman, captivated by my senses, or rather carried away, overcome by a youthful, healthy, powerful charm, which emanated from her fragrant person and from the well-molded lines of her body.

Another week passed, and the term of my journey was drawing on, for I had to be back in Paris by the eleventh of July. By this time Paul had come to take his part in the adventure, though still grumbling at me, while I invented pleasures, dis-

tractions and excursions to amuse Francesca and my friend; and in order to do this I gave myself a great amount of trouble.

One day I proposed an excursion to Sta Margarita, that charming little town in the midst of gardens, hidden at the foot of a slope which stretches far into the sea up to the village of Portofino. We three walked along the excellent road which goes along the foot of the mountain. Suddenly Francesca said to me: "I shall not be able to go with you to-morrow; I must go and see some of my relatives."

That was all; I did not ask her any questions, as I was quite sure she would not answer me.

The next morning she got up very early. When she spoke to me it was in a constrained and hesitating voice:

"If I do not come back again, shall you come and fetch me?"

"Most certainly I shall," was my reply. "Where shall I go to find you?"

Then she explained: "You must go into the Street Victor-Emmanuel, down the Falcone road and the side street San-Rafaël and into the furniture shop in the building at the right at the end of a court, and there you must ask for Madame Rondoli. That is the place."

And so she went away, leaving me rather astonished.

When Paul saw that I was alone, he stammered out: "Where is Francesca?" And when I told him what had happened, he exclaimed:

"My dear fellow, let us make use of our opportunity, and bolt; as it is, our time is up. Two days,

more or less, make no difference. Let us go at once; go and pack up your things. Off we go!"

But I refused. I could not, as I told him, leave the girl in that manner after such companionship for nearly three weeks. At any rate, I ought to say good-by to her, and make her accept a present; I certainly had no intention of behaving badly to her.

But he would not listen; he pressed and worried me, but I would not give way.

I remained indoors for several hours, expecting Francesca's return, but she did not come, and at last, at dinner, Paul said with a triumphant air: "She has flown, my dear fellow; it is certainly very strange."

I must acknowledge that I was surprised and rather vexed. He laughed in my face, and made fun of me.

"It is not exactly a bad way of getting rid of you, though rather primitive. 'Just wait for me, I shall be back in a moment,' they often say. How long are you going to wait? I should not wonder if you were foolish enough to go and look for her at the address she gave you. 'Does Madame Rondoli live here, please?' 'No, monsieur.' I'll bet that you are longing to go there."

"Not in the least," I protested, "and I assure you that if she does not come back to-morrow morning I shall leave by the express at eight o'clock. I shall have waited twenty-four hours, and that is enough; my conscience will be quite clear."

I spent an uneasy and unpleasant evening, for I really had at heart a very tender feeling for her. I went to bed at twelve o'clock, and hardly slept at

all. I got up at six, called Paul, packed up my things, and two hours later we set out for France together.

III

The next year, at just about the same period, I was seized as one is with a periodical fever, with a new desire to go to Italy, and I immediately made up my mind to carry it into effect. There is no doubt that every really well-educated man ought to see Florence, Venice and Rome. This travel has, also, the additional advantage of providing many subjects of conversation in society, and of giving one an opportunity for bringing forward artistic generalities which appear profound.

This time I went alone, and I arrived at Genoa at the same time as the year before, but without any adventure on the road. I went to the same hotel, and actually happened to have the same room.

I was hardly in bed when the recollection of Francesca which, since the evening before, had been floating vaguely through my mind, haunted me with strange persistency. I thought of her nearly the whole night, and by degrees the wish to see her again seized me, a confused desire at first, which gradually grew stronger and more intense. At last I made up my mind to spend the next day in Genoa to try to find her, and if I should not succeed, to take the evening train.

Early in the morning I set out on my search. I remembered the directions she had given me when she left me, perfectly—Victor-Emmanuel Street, house of the furniture-dealer, at the bottom of the yard on the right.

I found it without the least difficulty, and I knocked at the door of a somewhat dilapidated-looking dwelling. It was opened by a stout woman, who must have been very handsome, but who actually was only very dirty. Although she had too much *embonpoint,* she still bore the lines of majestic beauty; her untidy hair fell over her forehead and shoulders, and one fancied one could see her floating about in an enormous dressing-gown covered with spots of dirt and grease. Round her neck she wore a great gilt necklace, and on her wrists were splendid bracelets of Genoa filigree work.

In rather a hostile manner she asked me what I wanted, and I replied by requesting her to tell me whether Francesca Rondoli lived there.

"What do you want with her?" she asked.

"I had the pleasure of meeting her last year, and I should like to see her again."

The old woman looked at me suspiciously.

"Where did you meet her?" she asked.

"Why, here in Genoa itself."

"What is your name?"

I hesitated a moment, and then I told her. I had hardly done so when the Italian put out her arms as if to embrace me. "Oh! you are the Frenchman; how glad I am to see you! But what grief you caused the poor child! She waited for you a month; yes, a whole month. At first she thought you would come to fetch her. She wanted to see whether you loved her. If you only knew how she cried when she saw that you were not coming! She cried till she seemed to have no tears left. Then she went to the hotel, but you had gone. She thought that most likely you were travelling in Italy,

and that you would return by Genoa to fetch her, as she would not go with you. And she waited more than a month, monsieur; and she was so unhappy; so unhappy. I am her mother."

I really felt a little disconcerted, but I regained my self-possession, and asked:

"Where is she now?"

"She has gone to Paris with a painter, a delightful man, who loves her very much, and who gives her everything that she wants. Just look at what she sent me; they are very pretty, are they not?"

And she showed me, with quite southern animation, her heavy bracelets and necklace. "I have also," she continued, "earrings with stones in them, a silk dress, and some rings; but I only wear them on grand occasions. Oh! she is very happy, monsieur, very happy. She will be so pleased when I tell her you have been here. But pray come in and sit down. You will take something or other, surely?"

But I refused, as I now wished to get away by the first train; but she took me by the arm and pulled me in, saying:

"Please, come in; I must tell her that you have been in here."

I found myself in a small, rather dark room, furnished with only a table and a few chairs.

She continued: "Oh, she is very happy now, very happy. When you met her in the train she was very miserable; she had had an unfortunate love affair in Marseilles, and she was coming home, poor child. But she liked you at once, though she was still rather sad, you understand. Now she has all she wants, and she writes and tells me everything that she does. His name is Bellemin, and they say

he is a great painter in your country. He fell in love with her at first sight. But you will take a glass of sirup?—it is very good. Are you quite alone, this year?"

"Yes," I said, "quite alone."

I felt an increasing inclination to laugh, as my first disappointment was dispelled by what Mother Rondoli said. I was obliged, however, to drink a glass of her sirup.

"So you are quite alone?" she continued. "How sorry I am that Francesca is not here now; she would have been company for you all the time you stayed. It is not very amusing to go about all by oneself, and she will be very sorry also."

Then, as I was getting up to go, she exclaimed:

"But would you not like Carlotta to go with you? She knows all the walks very well. She is my second daughter, monsieur."

No doubt she took my look of surprise for consent, for she opened the inner door and called out up the dark stairs which I could not see:

"Carlotta! Carlotta! make haste down, my dear child."

I tried to protest, but she would not listen.

"No; she will be very glad to go with you; she is very nice, and much more cheerful than her sister, and she is a good girl, a very good girl, whom I love very much."

In a few moments a tall, slender, dark girl appeared, her hair hanging down, and her youthful figure showing unmistakably beneath an old dress of her mother's.

The latter at once told her how matters stood.

"This is Francesca's Frenchman, you know, the

one whom she knew last year. He is quite alone, and has come to look for her, poor fellow; so I told him that you would go with him to keep him company."

The girl looked at me with her handsome dark eyes, and said, smiling:

"I have no objection, if he wishes it."

I could not possibly refuse, and merely said:

"Of course, I shall be very glad of your company."

Her mother pushed her out. "Go and get dressed directly; put on your blue dress and your hat with the flowers, and make haste."

As soon as she had left the room the old woman explained herself: "I have two others, but they are much younger. It costs a lot of money to bring up four children. Luckily the eldest is off my hands at present."

Then she told all about herself, about her husband, who had been an employé on the railway, but who was dead, and she expatiated on the good qualities of Carlotta, her second girl, who soon returned, dressed, as her sister had been, in a striking, peculiar manner.

Her mother examined her from head to foot, and, after finding everything right, she said:

"Now, my children, you can go." Then turning to the girl, she said: "Be sure you are back by ten o'clock to-night; you know the door is locked then." The answer was:

"All right, mamma; don't alarm yourself."

She took my arm and we went wandering about the streets, just as I had wandered the previous year with her sister.

We returned to the hotel for lunch, and then I took my new friend to Santa Margarita, just as I had taken her sister the year previously.

During the whole fortnight which I had at my disposal, I took Carlotta to all the places of interest in and about Genoa. She gave me no cause to regret her sister.

She cried when I left her, and the morning of my departure I gave her four bracelets for her mother, besides a substantial token of my affection for herself.

One of these days I intend to return to Italy, and I cannot help remembering with a certain amount of uneasinses, mingled with hope, that Madame Rondoli has two more daughters.

AT LOËCHE

DIARY OF THE MARQUIS DE ROSEVEYRE

Loëche, June 12, 1880.

I HAVE been ordered to spend a month at Loëche! Merciful heavens! To think of spending one whole month in this town which is said to be the gloomiest, the deadliest, the most tiresome of all the watering places! What am I saying, a town? It is a hole, scarcely even a village! In short, I have been condemned to a month in the penitentiary!

June 13.—I dreamed all night about this frightful trip. I have just one thing left to do. I must take a companion with me! That might help me pass the time. And then this will also give me the chance to find out whether or not I am prepared for married life.

A month in *tête-à-tête* with a woman, just we two, with long talks at any time of day or night! The deuce!

True, it is not as serious to take a woman for a month as to take her for a lifetime, but it is much more serious than to take her for a shorter time. Of course I could always provide for her and send her away; but then I would be left alone in Loëche, a thing which I would not in the least relish!

The choice will be difficult. I wish neither a co-

quette nor a fool. I do not wish to be made ridiculous nor to be ashamed of her. I am willing that people should say: "The Marquis de Roseveyre is in luck," but I do not want them to whisper: "That poor Marquis de Roseveyre!" On the whole, I want my temporary companion to have all the qualities which I shall demand of my permanent companion. The only difference there is to be made is the same which exists between a new article and one bought at a bargain. Bah! It is easy enough to find, if one takes the trouble to look!

June 14.—Bertha! The very person! Twenty! Twenty, pretty, just graduated from the Conservatoire, waiting for a part, a future star. Good manners, a proud bearing, wit and—love! A bargain which can easily pass for a new article.

June 15.—She is free! She accepts, having no business or other engagements. I myself ordered her gowns, in order to be sure that she would not look common.

June 20.—Basle. She sleeps. I will begin my traveling notes.

She is quite charming. When she met me at the station, I did not recognize her; she looked like a woman of the world. That child certainly has a future ahead of her—on the stage.

Her manner seemed entirely changed; her walk, bearing, gestures, smile, voice, everything was irreproachable. Her hair was dressed divinely, in a charming and simple manner, like a woman who no longer has to attract attention and please every one, but who wishes to be agreeable in a discreet manner to one only. Everything about her showed this. It was so delicately and completely indicated, the

change seemed to be so clever and complete that I offered her my arm just as I would have done to my wife. She took it with ease, as though she were really such.

Alone in the train we first sat motionless and silent. Then she lifted her veil and smiled. Nothing more. A well-bred smile. Oh! I feared the embrace, the comedy of tenderness, the eternal and hackneyed game of women of her kind; but she controlled herself. She is very clever. We conversed a little like married people, a little like strangers. She was charming. She often smiled when she looked at me. It was I who now felt like kissing her. But I remained calm.

At the frontier an official covered with braid quickly opened the door and asked me:

"Your name, monsieur?"

I was surprised. I answered:

"Marquis de Roseveyre."

"Where are you going?"

"To the baths at Loëche, in the Valais."

He wrote all this down, and then continued:

"Is madame your wife?"

What was to be done? What could I answer? I hesitated and lifted my eyes to her. She was pale and looking out in the distance. . . . I felt that I might shame her needlessly. And then, she was to be my companion for a month.

I answered: "Yes, monsieur."

I saw her suddenly blush. I was pleased.

When I arrived here at the hotel the proprietor held out the register to her. She immediately passed it to me, and I knew that she was watching me write. It was our first evening of intimacy!

Once the page turned over, who would read this register? I wrote: "Marquis and Marquise de Roseveyre, on their way to Loëche."

June 21.—Basle, 6 A.M. We are leaving for Bern. I have certainly been lucky.

June 21.—10 P.M. What a strange day it has been! I am quite moved. How foolish and ridiculous!

During the trip we spoke but little. She had risen early and was tired; she was dozing.

As soon as we reached Bern we wished to see the panorama of the Alps, which I did not know at all; we started out through the town like a new-married couple.

Suddenly we perceived an immense plain, and away over there, far away in the distance, the glaciers. Seen from the distance like that they did not look immense, and yet this view thrilled me. A glorious setting sun was shining down upon us; the heat was intense. Yet those mountains of ice remained cold and white. The Jungfrau, the Virgin, towering over her brothers, with her broad side stretched toward us, and all around her the snow-capped giants raised their heads, seeming ever paler in the dying day, standing out like silver against the azure sky.

Their gigantic and motionless mass gave me the impression of a new and surprising world, of steep regions, dead and frozen, but as fascinating as the sea, full of a mysterious power and seduction. The air which had caressed these ever-frozen heights seemed to come to us across the blossoming country, different from that of the field. It contained some-

thing harsh, strong and sterile, like the flavor of inaccessible regions.

Bertha, bewildered, was looking on, without pronouncing a word.

Suddenly she took my hand and pressed it. I myself felt a kind of fever, this exaltation which comes over us at unexpected sights. I took this trembling little hand and carried it to my lips; and I believed that I kissed it with affection.

I was quite upset. What was the cause? She or the glaciers?

June 24.—Loëche, 10 P.M. The whole trip was delightful. We spent a half a day at Thun, looking over the delightful outline of the mountains, which we were to cross the following day.

At sunset we crossed the lake, probably the most beautiful one in Switzerland. Mules were waiting for us. We mounted them and started off. We breakfasted in a little town and then began the ascent of the narrow wooded gorge, continually overlooked by high peaks. From time to time, on the slopes which seemed to come down from heaven, we could distinguish little white spots, little Swiss cottages, clinging there, no one knows how. We crossed torrents, and, at times, between two pine-covered peaks we would see an immense pyramid of snow, which looked as though it were near enough to reach in twenty minutes, and yet which was at least twenty-four hours distant.

Sometimes we crossed narrow little plains littered with rocks, as though two mountains had clashed in this arena and had left on this battlefield these remains of their granite limbs.

Bertha, exhausted, was sleeping on her animal,

occasionally opening her eyes to see where she was. Finally she slept, and I supported her with my arm, happy to feel this contact of her warm body. Night came; we were still climbing. We stopped before the door of a little inn, lost in the mountains.

How we slept that night!

At daybreak I ran to the window and uttered a cry. Bertha followed me, and we stood there, surprised and delighted. We had slept in the snows.

All about us enormous, barren mountains, whose gray bones showed through their white cloaks, mournful, frozen mountains without a tree, rose so high that they seemed inaccessible.

An hour after starting out we perceived, at the bottom of the funnel of granite and snow, a black, gloomy lake without a ripple, which we followed for a long time. A guide brought us a few edelweiss, the pale flowers of the glaciers. Bertha pinned them to her waist.

Suddenly the rocky gorge opened out before us, uncovering a wonderful view: the whole stretch of the Piedmontese Alps beyond the valley of the Rhône. High peaks overlooked the lesser heights. There was Mount Rose, solemn and heavy; the Cervin, that straight pyramid where so many men have died, the Dent du Midi, and a hundred other white points, sparkling like diamonds under the white sun.

Suddenly the path which we had been following stopped at the edge of a precipice, and far down, at the bottom of the black hole, seven thousand feet deep, inclosed in four walls of straight, brown, stern rocks, on a field of grass, we noticed a few

white specks, like sheep in a field. They were the houses of Loëche.

The road being dangerous, we were forced to dismount from the mules. The path descends along the rock, winding, twisting and turning, always overlooking the precipice and the village, which grows as we come nearer. This is known as the pass of the Gemmi, one of the most beautiful if not *the* most beautiful of the Alps.

Bertha was leaning on me, uttering little cries of joy and fear, happy and timid as a child. Once, when we were a few feet behind the guide and hidden by an outjutting rock, she kissed me. I held her close. . . .

I had said to myself:

"At Loëche I will take care to let it be understood that I am not with my wife."

But everywhere that we have been I had treated her as such, and she had passed for the Marquise de Roseveyre. At this late date I could scarcely register her under another name. And then, I would have offended her, and really she was charming.

But I said to her:

"My dear, you are bearing my name; I am thought to be your husband; I expect you to act with extreme caution and discretion. Don't make friends, or talk or gossip. Let people think that you are proud and act so that I may not have to regret the step which I have taken."

She answered:

"Never fear, my little René."

June 26.—Loëche is not at all dismal. It is wild, but very beautiful. This wall of rocks, seven thousand feet high, from which spring a hundred differ-

ent torrents like ribbons of silver; this constant noise of rushing water; this village buried in the Alps, from which one looks up to the sun as from the bottom of a deep well; the neighboring glacier, so white in the notch in the mountain, and this valley, full of brooks, full of trees, of freshness and of life, which descends toward the Rhône and shows in the distance the snowy peaks of the Piedmont: all this thrills and charms me. Perhaps—if Bertha were not here?

This child is a gem, more reserved and distinguished than any one. I hear people saying:

"That little marquise is truly charming!"

June 27.—First bath. One goes directly from the room to the pool, where twenty bathers, clad in long woolen robes, are already dipping in the water, men and women together. Some eat, some read, some talk. We push before us little floating tables. Sometimes we play tag, which is not entirely proper. Seen from the galleries which surround the bath, we look like enormous toads in a tub. Bertha sat in this gallery and talked to me a little. Everybody looked at her.

June 28.—Second bath. I spent four hours in the water. In a week I will spend eight hours there. As co-plungers I have the Prince of Vanoris (Italy), Count Lovenberg (Austria), Baron Samuel Vernhe (Hungary or elsewhere), plus about fifteen persons of less importance, but all noble. In watering places everybody is noble. One after the other they asked to be introduced to Bertha. I answer: "Yes!" and slip away. They think me jealous; how foolish!

June 29.—Consternation! Princess Vanoris her-

self came up to me as we were returning to the hotel and asked to meet my wife. I introduced Bertha, but I asked her to avoid this lady as much as possible.

July 2.—The prince collared us yesterday and brought us to his apartments, where all the bathers of note take tea. Bertha was certainly more charming than any of the other women. What can I do?

July 3.—After all, I can't help it! Among these thirty noblemen there must be at least ten imaginary ones! Among these sixteen or seventeen women are there more than twelve who are really married; and among these twelve are there more than six of them above reproach? So much the worse for them, so much the worse for them! They wished it!

July 10.—Bertha is the queen of Loëche! Everybody is wild about her; they adore her and spoil her. She is superb, graceful and distinguished. Everybody envies me. Princess Vanoris asked me:

"Tell me, marquis, where did you find that treasure?"

I felt a strong desire to answer:

"First prize at Conservatoire, engaged at the Odéon, free after August 5, 1880!"

Heavens! How she would have looked if I had said that!

July 20.—Bertha is truly surprising. Never has she failed to show the proper tact or taste; she is a wonder!

* * * * * * *

August 10.—Paris. All is over! I feel sad. The day before our departure I thought that every one would cry.

We had decided to watch the sun rise from the Torrenthorn, then to come back before leaving. We started out on mules toward night. The guides were carrying lanterns. The long cavern straggled along the winding path through the pine forest. Then we crossed through pasture lands, where herds of cows roam around at large. Then we reached the stony region, where even grass no longer grows.

At times, through the darkness, we could distinguish, either to the right or to the left, a white mass, a heap of snow piled up in a crevasse in the mountain.

The cold was becoming biting, stinging the eyes and the skin. The dry wind of the heights was blowing, drying our throats and bringing with it the icy breath of hundreds of snowy peaks.

When we arrived at the summit it was still night. We unpacked all the provisions so that we could drink champagne to the rising sun.

The sky was growing lighter. We could already see a gulf at our feet, and then, a short distance away, another peak.

The whole horizon seemed livid, without our being able to distinguish anything in the distance.

Soon, to the left, we discovered an enormous peak, the Jungfrau, then another, and then another. They appeared little by little, as though rising with the dawning day. We stood there, bewildered at finding ourselves thus surrounded by these giants in this desolate country of eternal snow. Suddenly, opposite us, another endless chain unfolded itself, the Piedmont. Other peaks appeared to the north. This was indeed the immense land of great mountains, with icy brows, from the Rhindenhorn, as

massive as its name, to the faint outline of the patriarch of the Alps, the Mont Blanc. Some were straight and proud, others were bent and looked deformed, but all were equally white, as though some god had thrown over the hunchbacked earth a cloth of immaculate whiteness.

Some looked near enough to touch; others were so far away that they could barely be distinguished.

The sky grew red, and all the peaks blushed. They looked as though the clouds had bled upon them. It was superb, awe-inspiring. Soon the flaming color paled and the whole army of peaks gradully grew pink, of a soft and tender pink, like the gowns of a young girl.

The sun appeared above the quilt of snow. Then, suddenly, the whole land of glaciers turned white, of a dazzling white, as though the horizon were full of silver domes.

The women looked on, enraptured. They started as the cork popped from a champagne bottle. Prince de Vanoris offered a glass to Bertha and cried:

"I drink to the health of the Marquise de Roseveyre!"

She stood up on her mule and answered:

"I drink to all my friends!"

Three hours later we took the train for Geneva, in the valley of the Rhône.

As soon as we were alone, Bertha, who had been so happy and gay a little while ago, burst out sobbing, her face hidden in her hands. I fell to my knees, asking:

"What is the matter? What is the matter? Tell me, dearie, what is the matter?"

She stammered through her tears:

"It—it—it's all over, this being respectable!"

At that instant I certainly was on the point of committing a great blunder. I did not.

As soon as we reached Paris I left Bertha. Later on I would not have had the strength of will.

(The diary of the Marquis de Roseveyre shows nothing of interest during the following two years. On July 20, 1883, we find the following lines):

July 20, 1883.—Florence. Sad memories were brought back to me to-day. I was walking in the Cassines when a lady stopped her carriage and called me. It was Princess Vanoris. As soon as I came within speaking distance she called:

"Oh, marquis, my dear marquis, how glad I am to see you! Quick, quick, give me news of the marquise; she is undoubtedly the most charming woman that I have ever met in all my life."

I stood there, surprised, not knowing what to say, and with a sad feeling in my heart. I stammered:

"Don't speak of her to me, princess; I lost her three years ago."

She took my hand, saying:

"Oh! I sympathize with you, my poor friend."

She left me. I walked home, sad and discontented, thinking of Bertha as though we had just parted.

Fate often makes mistakes.

How often respectable women were born to be otherwise, and prove it.

Poor Bertha! How many of the others were born to be respectable. And those, more than the others, perhaps—— But—I must forget her.

FOR SALE

WHAT a pleasure it is to go for a walk just as the sun is rising, to drift along through the dewy fields, along by the seashore! What bliss! The sweet light kissing your eyes, the delicately perfumed air entering your nostrils and bathing your whole body in a gentle breeze.

Why do we retain such a sweet remembrance of certain precious minutes spent in communing with Mother Earth—the recollection of receiving a sweet sensation as of a delicate caress imprinted on one's memory at the sight of a picturesque bit of scenery, as though one had been permitted to catch a glimpse of some lovely nymph?

I remember one day when I was tramping along the Brittany coast, toward Cape Finistère. I was wandering along aimlessly near Quimperlé, in the most picturesque part of beautiful Brittany. It was one of those spring mornings which make one younger by twenty years, which gives one the hopes and dreams of youth.

I was following a path along the sea, by the wheat fields. The fields were still and the water was as quiet as a mill pond. The sweet odor of the sea and of ripening crops was everywhere. I was following my fancy along the coast, in a journey which had begun two weeks before. I felt strong, nimble, happy and free from care.

My thoughts were nowhere! Why should one think in those hours of unconscious joy, the joy of an animal running in the grass, or of a bird flying through the blue skies? In the distance I could hear the sound of singing voices. As it was Sunday, I thought it might perhaps be a religious procession, but as I turned a sharp bend in the path I stood motionless, spellbound. Five large fishing smacks appeared before me filled with men, women and children, who were going to high mass at Plouneven. They were drifting along the coast, gently propelled by a soft breeze which just filled the sails. Those heavy vessels were gliding along gently, loaded with passengers, and all those people were singing. The deep voices of the men standing by the rails, in their large hats, mingled with the shriller voices of the women and the high, flute-like notes of the children. The passengers of the five boats were chanting the same hymn, whose monotonous rhythm travelled clearly through the calm air. The five boats were sailing one behind the other, very close together. They passed in front of me, close to me, and as they disappeared I heard the singing grow fainter and fainter.

I gave my imagination the rein as one does in youth and in as puerile and enchanting a manner How quickly this age of dreams disappears, the happiest time of our life! We are never lonely or sad, never morose or disappointed when we have within ourselves the divine faculty of being able to lose ourselves in fond hopes as soon as we are alone. What a fairyland is the land where everything is possible in our flights of fancy! How beautiful is life in the golden light of dreams!

Alas! all that is over now!

I began to dream. What of? Of everything that one is expecting, of everything for which one is hoping, of fortune, of glory, of woman.

I was walking along quickly, running my hand across through the golden wheat ears which bent under my fingers and tickled my skin. As I turned round a little headland, I noticed, at the bottom of a narrow crescent-shaped beach, a white house, built on three terraces which descended to the sand.

Why did the sight of this house make me start with joy? How should I know? Sometimes in wandering about in this manner we see little nooks which we seem to have known for years, they look so familiar and give you a sense of contentment. May we not have lived there in years gone by? Everything is alluring, tempting, the faint line of the horizon, the position of the trees, the golden sand.

How pretty the house looked above its high terraces, which sloped down to the water like a giants' stairway, each one having on its ridge a row of shrubs of Spanish broom in flower, while all along them great fruit trees were growing.

I stopped, in love with the little house, overwhelmed with a desire to gain possession of it and live there forever!

Going up to the door, my pulse quickened as I noticed on the gate-post a large sign, "For Sale."

I felt a thrill of pleasure, as though this house had been offered to me, given to me. Why? I know not.

"For Sale." Then it scarcely belonged to any one; it might belong to anybody, to me, to me! Why

this unaccountable sensation of deep joy? I knew that I was not going to buy it! How could I pay for it? But it was for sale! The bird in the cage belongs to his master; the bird in the air belongs to me, being the property of no one else.

I went into the garden. What an alluring garden, with its espalier fruit trees with their long branches like the arms of crucified martyrs, its tufts of golden ginesta, and the two old fig trees at the end of each terrace. When I reached the last one, I turned round and looked across the sea. The little beach stretched at my feet, curved and sandy; it was cut off from the open sea by three large massive rocks, which closed the entrance to it, and acted as a breakwater as the waves rolled in from the sea on a stormy day.

On the opposite promontory two enormous stones, one standing, the other lying in the grass, a *menhir* and a *dolmen,* seemed to keep watch over the little house which they had seen built. For centuries they had known this little bay, once deserted; they would still be there when the little house crumbled and disappeared.

Oh, emblems of times gone by, how I love you!

I rang the bell as though I had been at home. A kindly looking little old woman, with a white cap on, and clad in a black dress, opened the door for me. It seemed as though I had always known her.

I said: "You are not from Brittany yourself, are you?"

She answered: "No, sir, I am from Lorraine." Then she added: "Have you come to visit the house?"

"That's what I should like to do."

I entered. I seemed to recognize everything—the walls, the furniture. I was even surprised not to see my canes standing near the door. I went into the parlor, a pretty little room covered with straw matting, and with three large windows looking out over the sea. On the mantelpiece stood a couple of vases and a large photograph of a woman. I immediately went toward it, persuaded that I would recognize that also. And I did, although I was certain that I had never met her. It was she, the one for whom I had waited, whom I desired, for whom I called, whose face haunted my dreams. It was she, the one we are always seeking everywhere, the one whom we expect to see in the street or on the country road as soon as we see a red parasol amid the wheat fields, the one whom we expect to find in the hotel when we are travelling or on the train which we are about to take, or in the parlor when the door opens before us.

It was she, undoubtedly she! I recognized her eyes, which were looking into mine, her soft wavy hair, and her mouth especially, with its sweet smile of which I had so often dreamed.

I immediately asked: "Who is this woman?"

The old lady answered drily: "It is madame."

"Your mistress?" I asked.

She answered in her quiet manner: "Oh, no, sir."

Taking a chair, I sat down and said: "Tell me about it."

She stood motionless, surprised, silent.

I insisted: "Is she the owner of the house?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"Well, to whom *does* the house belong?"

"To my master, Monsieur Tournelle."

Pointing to the photograph, I asked:

"Who is that woman?"

"That is madame."

"Monsieur's wife?"

"Oh, no, sir."

"His sweetheart then?"

Getting no answer, and torn by a queer kind of jealousy, of confused anger against the man who had found this woman, I asked:

"Where are they now?"

She murmured: "Monsieur is in Paris, but as for madame—I don't know where *she* is."

I started: "Then they are no longer together?"

"No, sir."

I was crafty, and in a solemn voice I said: "Tell me what has happened; I may perhaps be able to be of some service to your master. I know that woman; she is a bad lot."

The old servant looked at me, and encouraged by my open and frank appearance, she confided in me:

"Oh! she made my master so unhappy. He met her in Italy and brought her back with him. She was a beautiful singer. It was pitiful to see the way monsieur loved her. They were travelling in this neighborhood last year, when they saw this house, which had been built by a crazy man who wanted to be at least two leagues away from the village. Madame wanted to buy it immediately and to stay in it with my master. He bought the house to please her. They lived here all last summer and most of the winter. One morning, just before breakfast,

monsieur called me: 'Césarine, has madame returned?'

" 'No, sir.'

"We waited for her all day. He was raving. We searched for her everywhere, but she was not to be found. She had disappeared, no one knows where or how."

Oh, what joy filled me! I could have kissed the old woman. I felt like taking her in my arms and dancing round the parlor.

So she had gone, she had fled, she had left, tired of this man and disgusted with him! How happy I felt!

The old lady continued: "Monsieur became despondent, and he went back to Paris, leaving me here with my husband to sell the house. The price is twenty thousand francs."

But I was no longer listening! I was thinking of her! And suddenly it seemed as though I need only start out again in order to find her. She must have come back to the neighborhood, this spring, to see the house, her dear little house, which she would have loved so dearly, without him.

I dropped ten francs into the old servant's hand, seized the photograph and ran away, fondly kissing the dear cardboard image. I reached the road and started to walk with my eyes fixed on *her*. What luck that she should be free, that she should have left him! I would surely meet her to-day or to-morrow, this week or the next, since she had left him! She had left him because *my* time had come! She was somewhere in this world! I needed only to find her, since I already knew her.

And once more running my hands across the nod-

ding heads of ripe wheat, I drank in the sea air and felt the sun kiss my cheeks. I went on and on, bewildered with joy, intoxicated with hope. I went on, sure that I would soon meet her and bring her back once more to live in the pretty little house *"For Sale."* How happy she would be this time!

NOS ANGLAIS

A LITTLE bound notebook lay on the cushioned seat of the railway carriage. I took it up and opened it. It was a diary of his travels, lost by some traveller.

I here copy the three last pages.

February 1.—Mentone, chief city of consumptives, celebrated for its pulmonary tubercles. Very different from the tubercle of the sweet potato, which lives and germinates in the earth to nourish and fatten human beings, this species of vegetation lives and germinates in man to nourish and enrich the soil.

I got this scientific definition from a kind and learned physician of the district.

I am looking for an hotel, I am directed to the great Hotel de Russie, d'Angleterre et des Pays-Bas.

With great respect for the cosmopolitan intelligence of the proprietor, I take a room in this hospital which seems to me to be empty, it is so large.

Then I take a walk round the town, which is pretty, and pleasantly situated at the foot of an imposing mountain (see the guidebooks), I meet people who have a sickly appearance being led about by others who look bored. Here one comes across mufflers. (This is for naturalists who might be troubled at their disappearance.)

Six o'clock. I come home to dinner. The table was laid in an immense dining-room which was intended for three hundred guests, but which at present shelters exactly twenty-two. They come in one after another. First comes a tall Englishman, close-shaven and thin, with a long, tight-fitting frock coat, the sleeves of which confine his thin arms as an umbrella sheath covers an umbrella. This garment, which recalls the civilian uniform of old army captains, the dress of invalided veterans and the cassock of priests, was ornamented down the front with a row of black cloth buttons, placed close to each other like a battalion of wood lice. On the opposite side was a row of buttonholes. The waistcoat is fastened in the same manner. The owner of this suit does not appear to be humorous.

He bows to me. I return his politeness.

Second entry—Three ladies, three English women, a mother and two daughters. Each of them wears on her head what looks like a whiped egg, which astonished me. The daughters are as old as the mother, the mother is as old as the daughters. They are all three thin, with flat figures, tall, slow moving and stiff, and they show their teeth to inspire men and food with fear.

Other guests enter, all English. One of them alone is big and red-faced, with white whiskers. Each woman (there are fourteen) wears on her head a whipped egg. I perceive that this entremets headdress is made of white lace or foamy tulle, I do not know which. It does not seem to be sweetened. All these ladies appear to have been preserved in vinegar, although there are among them five young girls, not bad looking, but hopelessly flat.

I recall Bouilhet's lines:

Qu'importe ton sein maigre, ô mon objet aimé
On est plus près du cœur quand la poitrine est plate
Et je vois comme un merle en sa cage enfermé
L'amour entre tes os, rêvant sur une patte.

Two young men, younger than the first, are also enclosed in priestly frock coats. They are lay brothers, with wives and children, called pastors. They look cleaner, more serious and less amiable than our curés. I would not exchange a ton of these for a barrel of those. Everyone to his taste.

As soon as the guests were all in, the head pastor took the floor and pronounced in English a sort of very long bénédicité, that everyone at table listened to with a penitent air.

My food being thus consecrated, in spite of myself, to the God of Israel and of Albion, everyone began to eat their soup.

A solemn silence reign in the spacious dining-room, a silence which could not be normal. I suppose my presence is disagreeable to this colony, into which no tainted sheep had entered hitherto.

The women, in particular, have an appearance of stiffness and restraint, as if they feared that their little headdress of whipped egg might fall into their plates.

However, the head pastor addressed a few words to his neighbor, the assistant pastor. As I have the misfortune to understand a little English, I noticed with astonishment that they were resuming a con-

versation that had been interrupted before dinner, on the sayings of the prophets.

Everyone listened reflectively.

Then they fed me, still in spite of myself, on incredible quotations.

"I will pour out water for him that is thirsty," said Isaiah.

I knew nothing about it. I also knew nothing about all the truths uttered by Jeremiah, Malachi, Ezekiel, etc.

They entered my ears like flies, these simple truths and buzzed in my brain.

"Let him that hungers ask bread."

"The air belongs to the birds as the sea belongs to the fishes."

"The fig tree yields figs and the palm, dates."

"The man who does not heed will not obtain wisdom."

How much grander and deeper is our great Henri Monnier, who makes one man, the immortal Prud'-homme, utter more brilliant truths than all the prophets combined.

He cries on seeing the ocean: "The Ocean is beautiful, but what a waste of land!"

He formulates the eternal policy of the world: "This sword is the most beautiful day of my life. I shall know how to use it to protect the power that gives it to me, and, if necessary, to attack it."

If I had had the honor to be introduced to the company of English people by whom I was surrounded, I should assuredly have edified them with select quotations from our French prophet.

When dinner was over we went into the drawing room.

I sat alone in a corner. The British tribe seem to be conspiring at the other end of the spacious room. Suddenly a lady moved towards the piano.

I thought to myself:

"Ah, a little music. So much the better."

She opened the instrument, sat down before it, and all the colony surrounded her like a battalion, the women on the inside, and the men standing behind them.

Are they going to sing an opera?

The head pastor, now become leader of the choir, raised his hand, then lowered it, and a nameless, frightful clamor escaped from all these mouths which were singing a hymn.

The women squalled, the men roared, the windows shook. The hotel dog began to howl out in the yard and was answered by another in one of the rooms.

I fled, terrified, furious. And I went for a walk through the town. Not finding any theatre, or casino, or place of amusement, I had to come home again.

The English were still singing.

I went to bed. They kept on singing. They sang until midnight the praise of the Lord with the most discordant, screeching, odious voices I ever heard, while I, possessed by that horrible spirit of mimicry which led away an entire people in a dance of death, was humming beneath the sheets:

I am sorry for the Lord, the Lord God of Albion,
Whose glory they are singing in the parlor.
If the Lord has more ear
Than His faithful people,

If He loves talent, beauty,
Grace, wit, mirth,
Excellent mimicry and good music,
I pity the Lord
With all my heart.

And when, at last, I was able to sleep, I had a frightful nightmare. I saw prophets riding on the backs of the pastors and eating whipped eggs on the heads of corpses.

Horror! Horror!

February 2nd. As soon as I rose I asked the proprietor if these barbarians who had invaded his hotel renewed their frightful amusement each day.

He answered, smiling:

"Oh, no, sir, yesterday was Sunday, and you know that, with them, Sunday is sacred."

I replied:

Nothing is sacred for a pastor,
Neither the sleep of a traveller,
Nor his dinner, nor his ear.
But see to it that a similar thing
Does not occur again
Or without hesitation
I shall take the train.

A little surprised, the proprietor promised that he would keep a lookout.

I took a very pretty walk on the mountain side during the course of the day.

When evening came I even took part in the *bénédicité*. Then I went into the drawing-room. What are they going to do? For a whole hour they

did nothing. Suddenly, the same lady who played the accompaniment for the hymns the preceding evening moved towards the piano and opened it. I tremblied with fear. And she began to play—a waltz.

And the young girls began to dance.

The head pastor beat time on his knee from long habit. The Englishmen asked the ladies to dance and the whipped eggs turned round and round and round like whirling dervishes.

I enjoyed that more than hymns. After the waltz came a quadrille and a polka.

Not having been introduced, I remained sequestered in a corner.

February 3rd. Another pretty walk to the old Castelar, a charming ruin on the mountain which has remains of fortresses on all its summits.

There is nothing so beautiful as these ruins of strongholds amid the chaos of rocks which command the Alpine snows (see guide book). This country is delightful.

During the dinner I introduced myself, French fashion, to my neighbor. She did not make any reply. English politeness.

In the evening they had an English ball.

February 4th. Excursion to Monaco (see guide book).

In the evening, an English ball at which I took part, as though I carried infection.

February 5th. Excursion to San Remo (see guide book).

Evening—English ball. My quarantine continues.

February 6th. Excursion to Nice (see guide books).

Evening—English ball. I went to bed.

February 7th. Excursion to Cannes (see guide books).

Evening—English ball. I drank a cup of tea in my corner.

February 8th. Sunday, grand revenge. I was waiting for them, the upstarts.

They had resumed their penitent Sunday air and were preparing their voices to sing hymns.

Now, before dinner, I slipped into the drawing room, took the key of the piano and put it in my pocket, and said to the office clerk:

"If the parsons ask for the key, tell them that I took it and ask them to come and see me."

During dinner they discussed several disputed Scriptural passages, explained texts and cleared up the genealogies of biblical personages.

Then they went into the drawing-room and walked over to the piano. Consternation.

They take counsel together. The tribe seems cast down. The whipped eggs seem ready to fly away. At length the head pastor leaves the room and presently returns. They discuss the matter and look at me with indignant eyes, and then the three pastors move in my direction, one behind the other, like ambassadors. They really look quite imposing.

They bow to me. I rise from my seat. The oldest of them addresses me.

"Monsieur, they tell me that you have taken the key of the piano. The ladies would like to have it so that they can sing hymns."

I replied:

"Monsieur l'Abbé, I understand perfectly the request of these ladies; but I cannot grant it. You are

a religious man, sir, and so am I, and my principles, doubtless more strict than your own, have decided me to prevent the profanation to which you are yielding yourselves.

"I cannot permit, gentlemen, that you should employ, in order to sing to the glory of God, an instrument that has been used all the week to make young girls dance. We do not give public balls in our churches, monsieur, and we do not play quadrilles on organs. The use to which you put the piano angers and shocks me. You may take my reply to the ladies."

The three pastors retired in dismay. The ladies appeared amazed. And they began to sing hymns without the piano.

February 9th, Noon. The hotel proprietor came to ask me to leave. They are expelling me at the general request of the English.

I met the three pastors who seemed to be superintending my departure. I went straight up to them. I bowed.

"Gentlemen," I said, "you seem to be very well informed on the subject of the Scriptures. Personally I have given quite a little study to these subjects. I even know a little Hebrew. Now, I should like to submit to you a matter that troubles my Catholic conscience very much."

And after shocking them with a résumé of some biblical genealogies, I declared it was scandalous to make us read ten pages of genealogy at dessert.

"We spoil our eyes in order to learn that A. begat B., who begat C., who begat D., who begat E., who begat F., and when we are almost crazy from this interminable list, we arrive at the last who begat

nobody. We may call that, gentlemen, the acme of mystification!"

The three pastors then abruptly turned their backs on me as one man and fled.

Two o'clock. I am taking the train for Nice.

The journal ends here. Although these notes show extremely bad taste, a common mind and much coarseness, I thought that they might put certain travellers on their guard against the danger from English travellers.

I must add that there are charming English people. I know some, and many of them. But as a rule they are not those we meet in hotels.

whom others weary, tire, bore, silently torture, while isolation calms them, bathes them with repose in their independent and fanciful imaginings. In fact, this is a normal psychic phenomenon. Some are constituted to live a life on the external; others, to live a life within themselves. As for me, my interest in externals is quickly exhausted, and as soon as it reaches its limit I experience an intolerable discomfort both of body and mind.

As a result of this, I become attached, or rather, I became much attached, to inanimate objects, which have for me the importance of actual beings, and my house has become, had become, a world in which I lived an active and solitary life, surrounded by all manner of things, furniture, familiar knick-knacks, as sympathetic in my eyes as the faces of human beings. I had filled my home with them, little by little, I had adorned it with them, and I felt contented, satisfied, happy there as one might in the arms of a charming woman, whose wonted caresses had become a soothing and delightful necessity.

I had had this house constructed in the centre of a beautiful garden which hid it from the public highway, and which was near a city where I could always find the distractions of society, for which, at moments, I had a longing. All my servants slept in a separate building which was situated at some considerable distance from the house, at the far end of the kitchen garden, which was surrounded by a high wall. The darkness of the nights, in the silence of my isolated dwelling, concealed, buried beneath the foliage of great trees, was so reposeful and so delicious, that I lingered every evening for

several hours, before retiring, in order to enjoy the solitude a little longer.

One day "Sigurd" had been played at one of the city theatres. It was the first time that I had listened to that beautiful musical and fairy-like drama, and I had derived from it the liveliest pleasure.

I returned home on foot, with a light step, my head full of sonorous phrases, and my mind haunted by delightful visions. It was black, black night, so dark that I could hardly distinguish the highway, and I stumbled into the ditch more than once. From the custom house to my house is about a mile, perhaps a little more, or a leisurely walk of about twenty minutes. It was one o'clock in the morning, or maybe half-past one; the sky had by this time cleared somewhat and the waning moon appeared, the gloomy last quarter of the moon. The first quarter of the crescent moon, which rises about five or six o'clock in the evening, is clear, gay, and with a silver sheen; but the quarter that rises after midnight is reddish, sad and fateful; it is the true witches' moon. Every night prowler must have observed this. The first quarter, though slender as a thread, throws a faint joyous light which rejoices the heart and outlines distinct shadows on the ground; the last quarter sheds scarcely a dying glimmer, and is so wan that it causes hardly any shadows.

I perceived in the distance the sombre mass of my garden, and I know not why, but I was seized with a feeling of uneasiness at the idea of going indoors. I slackened my pace. The air was very

mild. The thick clump of trees had the appearance of a tomb in which my house lay buried.

I opened the outer gate, and entered the long avenue of sycamores which leads up toward the house, their branches meeting overhead and forming a kind of tunnel, and I passed through thick, impenetrable masses of shrubbery and skirted lawns with flower beds, oval patches of various indistinct hues.

On approaching the house, I was seized by a strange feeling. I stood still. Nothing could be heard. In the trees there was not even a breath of air. "What is the matter with me?" I said to myself. For ten years I had come home in the same way, without ever experiencing the least inquietude. I never had any fear at night. The sight of a man, a marauder or a thief, would have thrown me into a fit of rage, and I would have rushed at him without any hesitation. Moreover, I was armed, I had my revolver. But I did not touch it, for I was anxious to resist that feeling of dread that was taking posession of me.

What was it? Was it a presentiment? That mysterious presentiment which takes hold of the senses of men before they see something which, to them, is inexplicable? Perhaps! Who knows?

In proportion as I advanced, I felt shivers going through me, and when I was close to the wall of my spacious residence, with its closed shutters, I felt that I must wait a few minutes before opening the door and going inside. I sat down then on a bench under the windows of my drawing-room. I rested there, a little shaky, with my head leaning against the wall, my eyes wide open under the shade of the

foliage. For the first few moments I did not observe anything unusual around me; I had a humming noise in my ears, but that is not unusual. Sometimes it seems to me that I hear trains passing, that I hear clocks ticking, that I hear a multitude on the march.

Presently those humming sounds became more distinct, more concentrated, more recognizable. I had made a mistake. It was not the ordinary buzzing of my arteries which transmitted to my ears these rumbling sounds, but it was a very distinct, though very confused noise which came, without any doubt whatever, from the interior of my house. I distinguished through the walls this continued noise, I should say agitation rather than noise, an indistinct moving about of a pile of things, as if people were tossing about, displacing, and carrying away, surreptitiously, all my furniture.

I doubted, however, for some considerable time, the evidence of my hearing. But, having placed my ear against one of the shutters, the better to discover what this strange disturbance was inside my house, I became convinced, certain, that something altogether abnormal and incomprehensible was transpiring there. I had no fear, but I was—how shall I express it?—paralyzed by astonishment. I did not draw my revolver, knowing very well that there was no need of my doing so. I listened.

I listened a long time, but could come to no conclusion, my mind being quite clear, though half crazy with anxiety. I stood there listening to the noise, which gradually increased, and at intervals grew so loud that it seemed to be an impatient, angry disturbance, a mysterious commotion.

Then, suddenly, ashamed of my timidity, I seized my bunch of keys, selected the one I wanted, guided it into the lock, turned it twice, and, pushing the door with all my might, sent it banging against the wall.

The collision sounded like the report of a gun, and in response to that explosive noise there resounded, from roof to basement of my residence, a formidable tumult. It was so sudden, so terrible, so deafening, that I recoiled a few steps, and, although I knew it to be wholly useless, I pulled my revolver out of its case.

I still waited, but only a few minutes. Now I could distinguish an extraordinary pattering upon the steps of my grand staircase, on the waxed floors, on the carpets, not of boots, nor of naked feet, but of iron, and wooden crutches, which clattered like cymbals. Then I suddenly discerned, on the threshold of my door, an armchair, my large, reading, easy chair, which walked off waddling. It went away through my garden. Other chairs followed it, those of my drawing-room, then my sofas, dragging themselves along like crocodiles on their short paws; then all my chairs, bounding like goats, and the little footstools, hopping like rabbits.

Oh! what a sensation! I slunk back into a clump of bushes where I remained crouching, watching, meanwhile, my furniture defile past, for everything walked away, the one behind the other, briskly or slowly, according to its weight or size. My piano, my grand piano, bounded past with the gallop of a horse, and a murmur of music in its sides; the smaller articles crawled along the gravel like ants, my brushes, hand mirrors, goblets, the moonlight

being reflected in them like glow-worms which glistened in the moonlight. I saw my writing-desk appear, a rare curiosity of the last century, which contained all the letters I had ever received, all the history of my heart, an old history from which I have suffered so much! Inside it there were also many photographs.

Suddenly—I no longer had any fear—I threw myself on it, seized it as one would seize a thief, as one would seize a wife about to run away; but it pursued its irresistible course, and despite my efforts, and despite my anger, I could not even retard its pace. As I was resisting in desperation that insuperable force, I was thrown to the ground in my struggle with it. It then rolled me over, trailed me along the gravel, and the rest of my furniture, which followed it, began to march over me, trampling on my legs and injuring them. When I loosed my hold, other articles passed over my body, just as a charge of cavalry does over the body of a dismounted soldier.

Seized at last with terror, I succeeded in dragging myself out of the main avenue, and in concealing myself again among the shrubbery, so as to watch the disappearance of the most cherished objects, the smallest, the least striking, the least known, which had once belonged to me.

I then heard, in the distance, in my house that now sounded hollow like all empty houses, a loud noise of slamming of doors. They were slammed shut from top to bottom of my dwelling, even the door which I had just opened myself, fool that I was, for this exodus, and which was the last to close. I fled then, running toward the city, and only

regained my self-composure on reaching the boulevards, where I met some belated people. I rang the bell of a hotel where I was known. I had knocked the dust off my clothes with my hands, and I told the porter that I had lost my bunch of keys, which included also the key of the kitchen garden, where my servants slept in a house standing by itself, on the other side of the wall of the inclosure which protected my fruits and vegetables from the raids of marauders.

I covered myself up to the eyes in the bed which was assigned to me; but I could not sleep, and I waited for dawn listening to the throbbing of my heart. I had given orders that my servants were to be summoned to the hotel at daybreak, and my *valet de chambre* knocked at my door at seven o'clock in the morning.

His countenance bore a woeful look.

"A great misfortune has happened during the night, monsieur," said he.

"What is it?"

"Somebody has stolen the whole of monsieur's furniture, all, everything, even to the smallest articles."

This news pleased me. Why? Who knows? I was complete master of myself, bent on dissimulation, resolved to tell no one of anything I had seen; determined to conceal and bury in my heart of hearts a terrible secret. I responded:

"They must be the same people who have stolen my keys. The police must be informed immediately. I am going to get up, and will rejoin you in a few moments."

The investigation into the circumstances under

which the robbery might have been committed lasted for five months. Nothing was found, not even the smallest of my knickknacks, nor the least trace of the thieves. Good gracious! If I had only told them what I knew . . . If I had said . . . they would have locked me up—me, not the thieves, but the man who had seen such a thing as I described.

Oh, I knew how to keep silence! I never refurnished my house. That would have been useless. The same thing would have occurred again. I had no desire even to re-enter the house, and I did not re-enter it; I never visited it again. I went to Paris, to the hotel, and I consulted doctors in regard to the condition of my nerves, which had disquieted me a good deal ever since that fatal night.

They advised me to travel, and I followed their advice.

II

I began by making an excursion into Italy. The sunshine did me much good. During six months I wandered about from Genoa to Venice, from Venice to Florence, from Florence to Rome, from Rome to Naples. Then I travelled over Sicily, a country celebrated for its scenery and its mounments, relics left by the Greeks and the Normans. I passed over into Africa, I traversed at my ease that immense desert, yellow and tranquil, where camels, gazelles and Arab vagabonds roam about, where, in the rare and transparent atmosphere, there hover no ghosts, either by day or night.

I returned to France by Marseilles, and in spite

of all the Provençal gaiety, the diminished clearness of the sky made me sad. I experienced, in returning to the continent, the peculiar sensation of an invalid who believes himself cured, and who is warned by a dull pain that the seeds of the disease have not been eradicated.

I then returned to Paris. At the end of a month I was very dejected. It was the autumn, and I wished, before the approach of winter, to make an excursion through Normandy, a country with which I was unfamiliar.

I began my journey with Rouen, and for eight days wandered about, charmed, captivated, enthusiastic, in that city of the middle ages, in that astounding museum of remarkable Gothic monuments.

But one afternoon, about four o'clock, as I was sauntering slowly through a seemingly unattractive street, through which there runs a stream as black as ink called "Eau de Robec," my attention, fixed for the moment on the quaint antique appearance of some of the houses, was suddenly attracted by a row of second-hand furniture shops next door to one another.

Ah! they had carefully chosen their locality, these sordid traffickers in antiquities, in that quaint little street, overlooking that sinister stream of water, beneath those pointed gables of tile and slate on which still revolved the weathercocks of bygone days.

At the farther end of these dingy shops one saw, piled up, carved chests, Rouen, Sèvres, and Moustiers china, painted statues, others of oak, Christs, Virgins, saints, church ornaments, chasubles, capes, even sacred vases, and an old gilded wooden taber-

nacle whence God had departed. Oh! What singular caverns are in those lofty houses, crowded with objects of every description, whose existence seems to be ended, things which have survived their original possessors, their century, their times, their fashion, in order to be bought as curiosities by new generations.

My affection for bibelots was awakened in that city of antiquaries. I went from shop to shop, crossing, in two strides, the rotten four-plank bridges thrown over the nauseous current of the Eau de Robec.

Heaven protect me! What a shock! One of my most beautiful wardrobes was suddenly descried by me, at the entrance to an archway, which was crowded with articles of every description and which seemed to be the entrance to the catacombs of a cemetery of ancient furniture. I approached my wardrobe, trembling in every limb, trembling to such an extent that I dared not touch it. I put forth my hand, I hesitated. It was indeed my wardrobe, nevertheless; a unique wardrobe of the time of Louis XIII, recognizable by any one who had seen it only once. Casting my eyes suddenly a little farther, toward the more sombre depths of this corridor, I perceived three of my tapestry-covered chairs; and farther on still, my two Henry II tables, such rare treasures that people came all the way from Paris to see them.

Think! only think in what a state of mind I now was! I advanced, haltingly, quivering with emotion, but I advanced, for I am brave, I advanced as a knight of the dark ages would enter an enchanted cave.

I found, at every step, something that belonged to me; my brushes, my books, my pictures, my draperies, my firearms, everything, except the writing-desk full of my letters, and that I could not discover.

I walked on, descending dark passages, in order to ascend again to the floors above. I was alone, I called out, nobody answered, I was alone; there was no one in that house—a house as vast and torturous as a labyrinth.

Night came on, and I was compelled to sit down in the darkness on one of my own chairs, for I had no desire to go away. From time to time I shouted, "Hullo, hullo, somebody!"

I had sat there, certainly, for more than an hour when I heard steps, steps soft and slow, I knew not where. My impulse was to make my escape; but, bracing myself up, I called out again, whereupon I perceived a glimmer of light in the adjoining room.

"Who is there?" said a voice.

"A buyer," I responded.

"It is pretty late to come into a shop in that manner."

"I have been waiting for you for more than an hour," I answered.

"You can come back to-morrow."

"To-morrow I shall have left Rouen."

I dared not advance, and he did not come to me. I saw still the glimmer of his light, which shone on a tapestry on which were two angels flying over the dead on a field of battle. It belonged to me also. I said:

"Well, are you coming?"

"I am at your service," he answered.

I got up and went toward him.

Standing in the centre of a large room was a little man, very short and very fat, phenomenally fat, a hideous object.

He had a singuler beard of straggling yellowish hair, and not a hair on his head. Not a hair!

As he held his candle aloft at arm's length in order to see me, his cranium appeared to me to resemble a little moon, in that vast chamber encumbered with old furniture. His features were wrinkled and puffy, and his eyes could not be seen.

I bought three chairs which belonged to me, and paid at once a large sum for them, givng him merely the number of my room at the hotel. They were to be delivered the next day before nine o'clock.

I then started off. He conducted me, with much politeness, as far as the door.

I immediately repaired to the chief commissary of police, to whom I told the story of the robbery of my furniture and of the discovery I had just made. He required time to telegraph to the authorities who originally had charge of the case, for information, and begged me to wait in his office until he received a reply. An hour later, the answer came and bore out my statements.

"I am going to arrest and interrogate this man at once," he said to me, "for he may have conceived some sort of suspicion, and smuggled away what belongs to you. Will you go and dine and return in two hours? I shall then have the man here, and I will subject him to a fresh interrogation in your presence."

"Most gladly, monsieur. I thank you with all my heart."

I went to dine at my hotel and ate better than I could have believed possible. I was quite happy now; "they've got him," I thought.

Two hours later I returned to the office of the police functionary, who was waiting for me.

"Well, monsieur," said he, on perceiving me, "we have not been able to find your man. My agents cannot put their hands on him."

"Ah!" I felt myself sinking. "But—you have at least found his house?" I asked.

"Yes, certainly; and what is more, it is now being watched and guarded until his return. As for him, he has disappeared."

"Disappeared?"

"Yes, disappeared. He ordinarily passes his evenings at the house of a female neighbor, who is also a furniture broker, a queer sort of sorceress, the widow Bidoin. She has not seen him this evening and cannot give any information in regard to him. We must wait until to-morrow."

I went away. Ah! how sinister the streets of Rouen seemed to me, how distressing and haunted!

I slept so badly that I had a fit of nightmare every time I went off to sleep.

As I did not wish to appear too restless or eager, I waited till ten o'clock the next day before reporting to the police.

The merchant had not reappeared. His shop remained closed.

The commissary said to me:

"I have taken all the necessary steps. The court has been made acquainted with the affair. We will go together to that shop and have it

opened, and you shall point out to me all that belongs to you."

We drove there in a cab. Police officers were stationed at the building with a locksmith, and the door of the shop was soon opened.

On entering, I could not discover my wardrobes, my chairs, my tables; I saw nothing, nothing of that which had furnished my house, no, nothing, although on the previous evening, I could not take a step without encountering something that belonged to me.

The chief commissary, much astonished, regarded me at first with suspicion.

"My God, monsieur," said I to him, "the disappearance of these articles of furniture coincides strangely with that of the merchant."

He laughed.

"That is true. You did wrong in buying and paying for the articles which were your own property yesterday. It was that that gave him the cue."

"What seems to me incomprehensible," I replied, "is that all the places that were occupied by my furniture are now filled by other furniture."

"Oh!" responded the commissary, "he has had all night, and has no doubt been assisted by accomplices. This house must communicate with the adjoining houses. But have no fear, monsieur; I will have the affair promptly and thoroughly investigated. The brigand shall not escape us for long, seeing that we are in charge of his den."

Ah! My heart, my heart, my poor heart, how it beat!

I remained a fortnight at Rouen. The man did

not return. Heavens! good heavens! That man, what was it that could have frightened or surprised him?

But on the sixteenth day, early in the morning, I received from my gardener, now the keeper of my empty and pillaged house, the following strange letter:

'MONSIEUR:

"I have the honor to inform monsieur that there happened something the evening before last which nobody can understand, and the police no more than the rest of us. The whole of the furniture has been returned, not one piece is missing—everything is in its place, up to the very smallest article. The house is now the same in every respect as it was before the robbery took place. It is enough to make one lose one's head. The thing took place during the night between Friday and Saturday. The roads are torn up as though everything had been dragged along from the gate to the door of the house. The same thing was observed the day after the disappearance of the furniture.

"We are anxiously expecting monsieur, whose very humble and obedient servant I am,

"RAUDIN, PHILIPPE."

"Ah! no, no, ah! never, never, ah! no. I shall never return there."

I took the letter to the commissary of police.

"It is a very clever restitution," said he. "Let us say nothing about it. We shall catch the man one of these days."

But he has never been caught. No. They have not caught him, and I am afraid of him now, as though he were a ferocious animal that had been let loose behind me.

Not to be found! Not to be found, this monster with the moon skull. They will never find him. He will never return to his shop. What does he care! I am the only one who may meet him, and I do not wish to do so.

I do not wish it! I do not wish it! I do not wish it!

And if he returns, if he takes possession of his shop, who is to prove that my furniture was on his premises? There is only my testimony against him; and I feel that that is not above suspicion.

Ah! no! That kind of existence was no longer possible. I was not able to keep the secret of what I had witnessed. I could not continue to live like the rest of the world, with the fear upon me that those scenes might be re-enacted.

I came to consult the doctor who directs this lunatic asylum, and I told him everything.

After he had interrogated me for a long time, he said to me:

"Will you consent, monsieur, to remain here for some time?"

"Most willingly, monsieur."

"You have some means?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Will you have isolated apartments?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Would you care to receive any friends?"

"No, monsieur, no, nobody. The man from Rouen might take it into his head to pursue me here to be revenged on me."

And I have been alone, alone, all, all alone, for three months. I am growing tranquil by degrees. I have no longer any fears. If the antiquary should become insane . . . and if he should be brought into this asylum! Even prisons themselves are not places of safety.

WAS IT A DREAM?

"I LOVED her madly! Why does one love? Why does one love? How strange it is to see but one being in the world, to have but one thought in one's mind, one desire in the heart, and one name on the lips; a name that comes up continually, rising from the depths of the soul like water in a spring, and which one repeats over and over again, and murmurs ceaselessly everywhere, like a prayer.

"I am not going to tell you our story. Love is always the same. I met her and loved her; that is all. And for a whole year I lived in her tenderness, her caresses, in her arms, hung on her words and looks, loved her dresses, was so completely wrapped up, bound, imprisoned in everything that pertained to her that I no longer knew whether it was day or night, if I was dead or alive, on this old earth of ours or elsewhere.

"And then she died. How? I do not know; I no longer know. But one evening she came home wet, for it was raining heavily, and the next day she coughed, and she coughed for about a week, and took to her bed. What happened I do not remember now; but doctors came, wrote prescriptions, and went away. Medicines were brought, and a woman made her drink them. Her hands were hot, her forehead was burning, and her eyes bright and

sad. When I spoke to her she answered me, but I do not remember what we said. I have forgotten everything, everything, everything! She died, and I very well remember her little faint sigh—her last. The nurse said 'Ah!' and I understood, I understood!

"I knew nothing more, nothing. I saw a priest, who said: "Your sweetheart?" and it seemed to me as if he were insulting her. As she was dead, nobody had the right to know our relationship, and I turned him out. Another came who was very kind and tender, and I shed tears when he spoke to me about her.

"They consulted me about the funeral, but I do not remember anything that they said, though I distinctly recall the coffin and the strokes of the hammer as they nailed her down in it. Oh! God, God!

"She was buried! Buried! She! In that hole! Some people came—female friends. I made my escape, and ran away; I ran, and then I walked, through the streets, and finally went home. The next day I started on a journey.

* * * * * * * *

"Yesterday I returned to Paris, and when I saw my room again—our room, our bed, our furniture, everything that remains of the life of a human being after death—I was seized by such a violent recurrence of grief that I came very near opening the window and throwing myself out into the street. As I could no longer remain in the midst of these things, between these walls which had inclosed and sheltered her, and which retained a thousand atoms of her, of her skin and of her breath, in their imper-

ceptible crevices, I took up my hat to make my escape, and just as I reached the door I passed the large glass in the hall, which she had put there so that she could look at herself every day from head to foot as she went out, to see if her toilet was in order, and was correct and pretty, from her little boots to her hat.

"And I stopped short in front of that looking-glass in which she had so often been reflected—so often, so often that it also must have retained her reflection. I was standing there, trembling, with my eyes fixed on the glass—on that flat, profound, empty glass—which had contained her entirely, and had possessed her as much as I had, as my passionate looks had. I felt as if I loved that glass. I touched it; it was cold. Oh, the recollection! Sorrowful mirror, burning mirror, live mirror, horrible mirror, which makes us suffer such torments! Happy are the men whose heart is like a mirror where images glide and pass away; that forgets all it has contained, reflected, all that have basked in its love and affection! But I, how I suffer!

"I went out and, without knowing it, without wishing it, walked to the cemetery. I found her simple grave, a white marble cross, with these few words:

" 'She loved, was beloved, and died.'

"She was there, beneath the ground, decomposed! How horrible! I sobbed, with my forehead to the ground. I remained there a long time, a long time. Then I saw that it was getting dark, and a strange, mad wish, the desire of a despairing lover, seized me. I wished to pass the night, the last night, in weeping on her grave. But I should be

seen and driven out. How was I to manage? I was cunning, so I got up and began to roam about that city of the dead. I walked and walked. How small this city is, in comparison with the other, the city in which we live! And yet, how much more numerous the dead are than the living. We require high houses, wide streets, and much room for the four generations who see the daylight at the same time, drink water from the spring, wine from the vines, and eat the bread from the plains.

"And for all the generations of the dead, for all that ladder of humanity that has descended to us, there is scarcely anything, only a field, scarcely anything! The earth takes them back, oblivion effaces them. Adieu!

"At the end of this cemetery I suddenly perceived the abandoned cemetery where the dead have long since blended with the soil, where the crosses themselves decay, where the last comers will be put to-morrow. It is full of untended roses, of robust, dark cypress trees, a sad and beautiful garden, nourished on human flesh.

"I was alone, perfectly alone. I hid in a leafy tree, and concealed myself completely among the thick and sombre branches, and waited, clinging to the trunk, as a shipwrecked man does to a plank.

"When it was quite dark I left my refuge and began to walk softly, slowly, noiselessly through that ground full of dead people, and I wandered about for a long time, but could not find her again. I went on with extended arms, knocking against the tombs with my hands, my feet, my knees, my chest, even with my head, without being able to find her. I touched and felt about like a blind man groping

his way. I felt the stones, the crosses, the iron railings, the metal wreaths, and the wreaths of faded flowers! I read the names with my fingers, by passing them over the letters. What a night! What a night! I could not find her again!

"There was no moon. What a night! I was afraid, horribly afraid in these narrow paths, between two rows of graves. Graves! graves! graves! nothing but graves! On my right, on my left, in front of me, around me, everywhere there were graves! I sat down on one of them, for I could not walk any longer, my knees were so weak. I could hear my heart beat! And I could hear something else as well. What? A confused, nameless noise. Was the noise in my head, in the impenetrable night, or beneath the mysterious earth, the earth sown with human corpses? I looked about me, but I cannot say how long I remained there; I was paralyzed with terror, drunk with fright, ready to shout out, ready to die.

"Suddenly it seemed to me as if the slab of marble on which I was sitting was moving. Certainly it was moving, as if it were being raised. With a bound I sprang on to the neighboring tomb, and I saw, yes, I distinctly saw the stone which I had just left standing upright, and the dead person appeared, a naked skeleton, that was pushing the stone back with its bent back. I saw it quite clearly, although the night was so dark. On the cross I could read:

"*'Here lies Jacques Olivant, who died at the age of fifty-one. He loved his family, was kind and honorable, and died in the peace of the Lord.'*

"The dead man also read what was inscribed on

his tombstone; then he picked up a stone off the path, a little, pointed stone, and began to scrape the letters carefully. He slowly effaced them altogether, and with the hollows of his eyes he looked at the places where they had been engraved, and, with the tip of the bone that had been his forefinger he wrote in luminous letters, like those lines which one traces on walls with the tip of a lucifer match:

"'*Here reposes Jacques Olivant, who died at the age of fifty-one. He hastened his father's death by his unkindness, as he wished to inherit his fortune; he tortured his wife, tormented his children, deceived his neighbors, robbed every one he could, and died wretched.*'

"When he had finished writing the dead man stood motionless, looking at his work, and on turning round I saw that all the graves were open, that all the dead bodies had emerged from them, and that all had effaced the lies inscribed on the gravestones by their relations, and had substituted the truth instead. And I saw that all had been the tormentors of their neighbors—malicious, dishonest, hypocrites, liars, rogues, calumniators, envious; that they had stolen, deceived, performed every disgraceful, every abominable action, these good fathers, these faithful wives, these devoted sons, these chaste young girls, these honest tradesmen, these men and women who were called irreproachable. And they were all writing at the same time, on the threshold of their eternal abode, the truth, the cruel, terrible, and holy truth which every one on earth is ignorant of, or pretends to ignore.

"I thought that *she* also must have written something on her tombstone, and now, running

without any fear among the half-open coffins, among the corpses and skeletons, I went toward her, sure that I should find her immediately. I recognized her at once, without seeing her face, which was covered by the winding sheet, and on the marble cross, where shortly before I had read: *'She loved, was beloved, and died,'* I now read: *'Having gone out one day, in order to deceive her lover, she caught cold in the rain and died.'*

"It appears that they found me at daybreak lying on the grave unconscious."

NOTES OF A TRAVELER

SEVEN o'clock. A sharp whistle, and off we go. The train passes over the revolving disk with the noise of stage thunder, then it is lost in the night, panting, puffing up its vapor, throwing gleams of red light on passing walls, hedges, woods, and fields.

We are six, three on each seat, under the light of the lamp. Opposite me is a stout lady with a stout gentleman, an old married couple. A hunchback sits in the left corner; beside me is a young married pair, or, at least, a young couple. Are they married? The young woman is pretty and seems modest, but she smells too strongly of perfume. What kind of perfume is it? I know it without being able to name it. Ah! now I've got it. *Peau d'Espagne?* That tells nothing. Let us wait and see.

The stout lady looks at the young woman with an air of hostility which sets me to thinking. The stout gentleman closes his eyes. Already! The hunchback has rolled himself up into a ball. I no longer see where his legs are. One sees nothing but his bright eye under a Greek cap with a red button. Then he shrinks into his travelling-shawl. One might say that there was a little parcel thrown down on the seat.

The old lady alone stays awake, suspicious, uneasy, like a watchman whose duty it is to guard the order and morality of the occupants of the carriage.

The young people do not move; their knees are under the same shawl, and their eyes are open, but they do not speak; are they married?

I also pretend to sleep, and watch.

Nine o'clock. The stout lady is about to give in, she closes her eyes spasmodically, and her head drops on her breast, but she lifts it up again by fits and starts. Then at last she goes to sleep.

O sleep! ridiculous mystery which makes faces appear so grotesque, you are the revealer of human ugliness. You uncover all shortcomings, all deformities and all defects. You turn every face touched by you into a caricature.

I rise and put the light-blue shade over the lamp, and then I also go to sleep.

Every now and then I am awakened when the train stops. An employee calls out the name of a town, and then we go on.

Here is the dawn. We run alongside the Rhône, which is going down to the Mediterranean. Everybody is sleeping. The young people have their arms around each other. One of the feet of the young woman is peeping from under the shawl. She is wearing white stockings! That is ordinary: they are married! The air is not fresh in the compartment, and I open a window to change it. The cold coming in awakens every one, except the hunchback, who is snoring under his cover.

The ugliness of the faces becomes more accentuated in the light of the new day.

The stout lady, with red face and untidy hair,

looking like a fright, glances sidewise maliciously at her neighbors. The young woman looks smilingly at her companion. If she were not married she would have first looked into her mirror.

Here we are at Marseilles. Twenty minutes' stop. I breakfast. We go on. The hunchback is missing, and we have, instead, two old gentlemen.

Then the two married couples unpack their provisions. A chicken here, cold veal there, pepper and salt in paper, pickles in a handkerchief—everything to make you disgusted with food forever. I know nothing that is more common, more vulgar, more out of place, and more ill-bred than to eat in a carriage where there are other passengers.

If it is freezing, open the windows. If it is hot, close them and smoke your pipe, even if you detest tobacco; begin to sing, to bark, indulge in the most inconveniencing eccentricities, take off your shoes and stockings and pare your toe-nails; in short, pay these ill-bred people in their own coin for their lack of knowledge of what is good manners.

The far-sighted man will carry a flask of benzine or of kerosene oil to sprinkle on the cushions when the people beside him begin to eat their luncheon. Everything is permitted, anything is too good for the boors who poison you with the odor of their food.

Now we are running beside the blue sea. The sun beats down upon the coast dotted with charming towns.

Here is Saint-Raphael. Yonder is Saint-Tropez, the small capital of that deserted, unknown, and ravishing country called the Mountains of the Moors. A broad river not spanned by any bridge, the

Argens, separates this wild peninsula from the continent, and one can walk there for a whole day without meeting any one. Here, the villages perched upon the mountains, are the same as they were in former times, with their Oriental houses, their arcades, their low-vaulted doors ornamented with sculpture.

No railroad and no public conveyance penetrates into these splendid wooded valleys. Only an old mail-boat carries the mail from Hyères and Saint-Tropez.

We fly past. Here is Cannes, so pretty on the shore of its two gulfs, opposite the islands of Lérins, which would be two Edens for the sick, if they could be connected with the mainland.

Here is the Gulf of Juan; the armored squadron seems to lie asleep on the water.

Here is Nice. There is apparently an exposition in this city. Let us go to see it.

Following a boulevard, which seems like a marsh, we reach a building on a elevation, in doubtful taste, which seems a miniature replica of the great palace of the Trocadéro.

Inside there are some promenaders in the midst of a chaos of boxes. The exposition, which has officially been open for a long time, will doubtless be ready next year!

It would be attractive inside if it were finished. But it is far from that.

Two sections especially attracted me: that of the comestibles and that of the Fine Arts. Alas! there really are preserved fruits of Grasse here, and a thousand other good things to eat. But—it is forbidden to sell them! One may only look at them!

And that is so as not to injure the trade of the town! To exhibit sweetmeats for the mere pleasure of looking at them, and with an interdiction against tasting them, really seems to be one of the finest inventions of the human mind.

The Fine Arts are—in preparation! Yet some halls are open, where one may see very fine landscapes by Harpignies, Guillemet, Le Poittevin, a superb portrait of Mademoiselle Alice Regnault by Courtois, a delightful Béraud, etc. As for the rest —after unpacking!

As one must see everything on visiting a place, I will treat myself to an air trip in the balloon of MM. Godard and Company.

The mistral is blowing. The balloon is swaying in an uneasy way. Suddenly there is a detonation; the cords of the net have broken. The public is forbidden to come within the inclosure, and I also am turned out.

I climb upon my carriage and survey the scene.

Every moment some new attachment crashes with a singular noise, and the brown skin of the balloon attempts to rise from the meshes that hold it. Then suddenly, with a more violent explosion, there is an immense tear from top to bottom of the great ball, which falls together like a limp cloth, torn and dead.

The next morning on awakening I called for the newspapers and was astonished to read: "The tempest now raging on our coast has obliged the management of the captive and free balloons of Nice to empty its great aerostat, in order to avoid accidents. The system of instantaneous emptying used

by M. Godard is one of his inventions that redound most to his honor."

Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh, dear public!

The entire coast of the Mediterranean is the California of the pharmacists. One must be ten times a millionaire to dare purchase even a simple box of medicinal paste from these haughty merchants, who ask the price of diamonds for jujube.

One may go from Nice to Monaco by the Cornici pass, along the sea coast. There is nothing more charming than this road cut in the rock, which skirts gulfs, passes under arches, and turns and twists along the mountain through an admirable country.

Here is Monaco on its rock, and behind it Monte Carlo. Hush! I can understand how those who like to gamble adore this pretty little town. But how somber and sad it is for those who do not gamble! There is no other pleasure, no other attraction.

Farther on is Mentone, the hottest place on the coast, and the one most frequented by invalids. There oranges ripen and consumptives are cured.

I take the night train to return to Cannes. In my compartment there are two ladies and a man from Marseilles who is determined to tell stories of railway accidents, murders, and thefts.

"I once knew a Corsican, madame, who came to Paris with his son. I speak of a far-off time, for this was in the early days of the P. L. M. route. I joined them, since we were friends, and off we went.

"The son, who was twenty years old, was looking out of the window to see the train behind. His father kept repeating to him: 'He! Take care,

Mathéo! Don't lean out too far, or you may hurt yourself.' But the boy did not even answer.

"I said to the father:

"'Let him do it, if it amuses him.'

"But the father repeated:

"'Come now, Mathéo, don't lean out like that.'

"Then, as the son did not answer, he took him by the coat to make him sit back in the car, and pulled him. And then a corpse fell on our knees. He was minus his head, madame, for it had been cut off by a tunnel. And the neck did not even bleed any longer; it had fallen along the way."

One of the ladies heaved a sigh, closed her eyes, and sank upon her neighbor. She had fainted.

SOLITUDE

OUR dinner, a rollicking stag affair, was just over. One of my old friends said to me:

"Let us walk up the Champs-Elysées!"

We started off, sauntering along under the budding trees. All was quiet, except for the low, continuous rumble so characteristic of Paris. A light breeze fanned our faces, and thousands of stars dotted the dark sky like gold dust.

My companion said:

"I don't know why, but I breathe better here, at night, than in any other place. My mind seems to expand. At times, just for a second, it seems to me as though the divine secret of life were about to be discovered. Then the door is shut, and all is over!"

From time to time we could see two forms glide by alongside the trees. We were passing in front of a bench, where a couple were seated side by side, making a single dark patch.

My friend murmured:

"Poor things! It is not disgust but an immense pity which I feel for them. Of all the mysteries of human life, there is one which I have thoroughly solved: the great torture of our existence lies in the fact that we are eternally alone, and all our efforts and all our acts are only an attempt to escape this solitude. Those two lovers on the bench, in the

open air, are trying, like all living creatures, to put at least a temporary stop to their loneliness; but they are, and always will be, alone, just as you and I are alone.

"Some notice it more, some less; that's all.

"For some time I have been suffering the abominable torture of having understood, of having discovered, the awful isolation in which I live, and I know that nothing can stop it—nothing, you understand!

"Whatever we attempt to do, whatever may be the impulse of our hearts, the cry of our lips, the clasp of our arms, we are always alone!

"I dragged you out for this walk to-night so that I would not have to go home, because I am suffering terribly just now from the loneliness of my apartment. What good will it do me? I am speaking to you, you are listening to me, and we are both of us alone—side by side, but alone. Do you understand me?

"'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' say the Scriptures. They have the illusion of happiness. They do not feel the same lonely misery that we do; they do not, as I do, wander through life without any other than superficial contact, without any other joy than the selfish satisfaction of understanding, of seeing, and of suffering endlessly from the knowledge of our eternal isolation.

"You think I am crazy, don't you?

"Listen. For a year I have felt the loneliness of my life, each day I seemed to be sinking deeper and deeper into a dark pit whose edges I cannot find, whose bottom I cannot touch. I am in there alone, with nobody near me, no living creature taking the

same gloomy journey. This pit is Life. At times I seem to hear noises, voices, cries—I grope my way toward these confused sounds. But I never can tell whence they come; I never meet anyone, I never find another hand stretched out in the surrounding darkness. Do you understand?

"Some men have, at times, realized this solitude. "Musset cried:

> "'Who comes? Who calls me? No one!
> I am alone.—The hour has come.
> What loneliness! What wretchedness!

"But with him it was only a passing doubt, and not a final certitude, as it is with me. He was a poet; his life was full of fancies, of dreams. He was never truly alone. I am!

"Gustave Flaubert, who was one of the great sufferers of this world, because he was one of the illuminated thinkers, wrote these hopeless words to a friend: 'We are all of us in a desert. No one understands anyone else.'

"True, no one understands anyone else, whatever he may think, say, or attempt. Does the earth know what is happening in the stars, which are scattered through space like sparks; some of them so distant that all we can do is dimly to perceive their light; others so far off that they are lost in the infinite, and yet they may be as close together as the molecules of a body?

"Well, man knows no more about his neighbor. We are as far away from one another as these stars, and more isolated, because thought is unfaithomable.

"Do you know anything more terrible than constant intercourse with people whom we shall never

be able to understand? We love one another as though we were chained quite near together, with arms outstretched, but unable to approach any closer. We are constantly tortured by a desire to come closer to one another, but our efforts remain unavailing, our anger vain, our confidences fruitless, our embraces without power, our caresses without hope. When we wish to mingle, our mutual efforts to do so only make us clash against each other.

"I never feel more alone than when I am opening my heart to some friend, because then I understand better the impassable barrier which exists between us. He is there, I see his eyes looking into mine, but the soul which is behind them, I cannot see. He is listening to me. What does he think? Yes, what does he think? Do you understand this torture? Perhaps he hates me or despises me; perhaps he is laughing at me. He is thinking over what I am saying, he criticises me, scoffs at me, condemns me, considers me ordinary, or else a fool. How can I find out what he thinks? How can I find out whether he loves me as I love him, and what is happening in that little round head? What a mystery this is, the unknown thoughts of a human being, the concealed individual thoughts that we can never know, guide, influence, nor conquer!

"I have tried in vain to open all the doors of my soul, to make myself understood. Yet away down in its depths there is the secret place of my *ego* which nobody can enter. Nobody can dissover it or enter it, because nobody is exactly like me, because no one understands anyone else.

"Do you understand me yourself, at this moment? No, you think I am mad! You are examining me,

you are wary of me! You say to yourself: 'What is the matter with him to-night?' But if, some time in the future, you should manage to grasp, to guess at my horrible and subtle suffering, just come to me and say: *'I have misunderstood you!'* and you may make me happy for a second.

"It is women who best make me understand my solitude. How they have made me suffer, because they, more than men, have given me the illusion of not being alone!

"When one is in love, one seems to expand. A superhuman happiness fills your soul! Do you know why? Do you know whence comes this feeling of great joy? It is solely because we imagine ourselves no longer alone. The isolation, the great loneliness appears to cease. What a mistake!

"Tormented even more than we are by this eternal longing for love which gnaws at our lonely hearts, woman is the great illusion of the Dream.

"You know those delightful hours spent face to face with this creature with long hair and delicate features, whose glance maddens us. What delirium seizes us—takes hold of our minds! What illusion carries us away!

"It seems as though, in a few minutes, she and I would be one! But this time never comes, and after weeks of waiting, of hoping and of deceitful joy, I suddenly find myself even more lonely than ever before. After each kiss, after each embrace, the gulf widens. It is heartrending, terrible!

"Then, farewell, all is over! You hardly recognize this woman who has been so much to you during a period of your life, and whose thoughts you

have never known! At the very time when it seems that, through some mysterious accord, each had descended into the very depth of the other's soul, one little word shows us our error, shows us, like a flash of lightning in the dark night, the black abyss between us.

"And yet, perhaps, the most delightful thing in the world is to spend an evening with a beloved woman, without talking, almost perfectly happy in the very fact of her presence. Let us not ask more, for two beings never blend.

"As for me, now, I have closed my soul. I no longer tell anyone what I think, what I believe and what I love. Knowing myself condemned to this appalling loneliness, I observe things, without ever giving my opinion. What do I care for the ideas, the quarrels, the beliefs of others! Not being able to share anything with anyone, I have lost interest in everything. My hidden thoughts remain an eternal secret. I have commonplace answers for everyday questions, and a smile which says 'yes,' when I do not wish to take the trouble to answer.

"Do you understand me?"

We had gone up the long avenue to the Arc de Triomphe, and back again to the Place de la Concorde, for he had said all this very slowly, adding many details which I cannot remember at present.

He stopped, and, suddenly stretching his arm towards the great granite obelisk, standing like a sentinel in the centre of Paris, this exiled monument, bearing on its sides the history of its country written in strange characters, he cried:

"There! We are all like that!"

Then he left me without another word.

Was he intoxicated, crazy, or very wise? I have not yet found out. At times it seems to me that he was right, and then, again, I think he must have lost his mind.

OLD MONGILET

IN the office old Mongilet was considered a type. He was a good old employé, who had never been outside Paris but once in his life.

It was the end of July, and each of us, every Sunday, went to roll in the grass, or soak in the water in the country near by. Asnières, Argenteuil, Chatou, Bougival, Maisons, Poissy, had their habitués and their ardent admirers. We argued about the merits and advantages of all these places, celebrated and delightful to all Parsian employés.

Daddy Mongilet declared:

"You are like a lot of sheep! It must be pretty, this country you talk of!"

"Well, how about you, Mongilet? Don't you ever go on an excursion?"

"Yes, indeed. I go in an omnibus. When I have had a good luncheon, without any hurry, at the wine shop down there, I look up my route with a plan of Paris, and the time table of the lines and connections. And then I climb up on the box, open my umbrella and off we go. Oh, I see lots of things, more than you, I bet! I change my surroundings. It is as though I were taking a journey across the world, the people are so different in one street and another. I know my Paris better than anyone. And then, there is nothing more amusing than the entresols. You would not believe what one sees in

there at a glance. One guesses at domestic scenes simply at sight of the face of a man who is roaring; one is amused on passing by a barber's shop, to see the barber leave his customer whose face is covered with lather to look out in the street. One exchanges heartfelt glances with the milliners just for fun, as one has no time to alight. Ah, how many things one sees!

"It is the drama, the real, the true, the drama of nature, seen as the horses trot by. Heavens! I would not give my excusions in the omnibus for all your stupid excursions in the woods."

"Come and try it, Mongilet, come to the country once just to see."

"I was there once," he replied, "twenty years ago, and you will never catch me there again."

"Tell us about it, Mongilet."

"If you wish to hear it. This is how it was: You knew Boivin, the old editorial clerk, whom we called Boileau?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"He was my office chum. The rascal had a house at Colombes and always invited me to spend Sunday with him. He would say:

" 'Come along, Maculotte [he called me Maculotte for fun]. You will see what a nice excursion we will take.'

"I let myself be entrapped like an animal, and set out, one morning by the 8 o'clock train. I arrived at a kind of town, a country town where there is nothing to see, and I at length found my way to an old wooden door with an iron bell, at the end of an alley between two walls.

"I rang, and waited a long time, and at last

the door was opened. What was it that opened it? I could not tell at the first glance. A woman or an ape? The creature was old, ugly, covered with old clothes that looked dirty and wicked. It had chicken's feathers in its hair and looked as though it would devour me.

"'What do you want?' she said.

"'Mr. Boivin.'

"'What do you want of him, of Mr. Boivin?'

"I felt ill at ease on being questioned by this fury. I stammered: 'Why—he expects me.'

"'Ah, it is you who have come to luncheon?'

"'Yes,' I stammered, trembling.

"Then, turning toward the house, she cried in an angry tone:

"'Boivin, here is your man!'

"It was my friend's wife. Little Boivin appeared immediately on the threshold of a sort of barrack of plaster covered with zinc, that looked like a foot stove. He wore white duck trousers covered with stains and a dirty Panama hat.

"After shaking my hands warmly, he took me into what he called his garden. It was at the end of another alleyway enclosed by high walls and was a little square the size of a pocket handkerchief, surrounded by houses that were so high that the sun could reach it only two or three hours in the day. Pansies, pinks, wallflowers and a few rose bushes were languishing in this well without air, and hot as an oven from the refraction of heat from the roofs.

"'I have no trees,' said Boivin, 'but the neighbors' walls take their place. I have as much shade as in a wood.'

"Then he took hold of a button of my coat and said in a low tone:

"'You can do me a service. You saw the wife. She is not agreeable, eh? To-day, as I had invited you, she gave me clean clothes; but if I spot them all is lost. I counted on you to water my plants.'

"I agreed. I took off my coat, rolled up my sleeves, and began to work the handle of a kind of pump that wheezed, puffed and rattled like a consumptive as it emitted a thread of water like a Wallace drinking fountain. It took me ten minutes to water it and I was in a bath of perspiration. Boivin directed me:

"'Here—this plant—a little more; enough—now this one.'

"The watering pot leaked and my feet got more water than the flowers. The bottoms of my trousers were soaking and covered with mud. And twenty times running I kept it up, soaking my feet afresh each time, and perspiring anew as I worked the handle of the pump. And when I was tired out and wanted to stop, Boivin, in a tone of entreaty, said as he put his hand on my arm:

"'Just one more watering pot full—just one, and that will be all.'

"To thank me he gave me a rose, a big rose, but hardly had it touched my button-hole than it fell to pieces, leaving only a hard little green knot as a decoration. I was surprised, but said nothing.

"Mme. Boivin's voice was heard in the distance: 'Are you ever coming? When you know that luncheon is ready!'

"We went toward the foot stove. If the garden was in the shade, the house, on the other hand, was

in the blazing sun, and the sweating room in the Turkish bath is not as hot as was my friend's dining room.

"Three plates at the side of which were some half-washed forks, were placed on a table of yellow wood in the middle of which stood an earthenware dish containing boiled beef and potatoes. We began to eat.

"A large water bottle full of water lightly colored with wine attracted my attention. Boivin, embarrassed, said to his wife:

"'See here, my dear, just on a special occasion, are you not going to give us some plain wine?'

"She looked at him furiously.

"'So that you may both get tipsy, is that it, and stay here gabbing all day? A fig for your special occasion!'

"He said no more. After the stew she brought in another dish of potatoes cooked with bacon. When this dish was finished, still in silence, she announced:

"'That is all! Now get out!'

"Boivin looked at her in astonishment.

"'But the pigeon—the pigeon you plucked this morning?'

"She put her hands on her hips:

"'Perhaps you have not had enough? Because you bring people here is no reason why we should devour all that there is in the house. What is there for me to eat this evening?'

"We rose. Boivin whispered:

"'Wait for me a second, and we will skip.'

"He went into the kitchen where his wife had gone, and I overheard him say:

"'Give me twenty sous, my dear.'

"'What do you want with twenty sous?'

"'Why, one does not know what may happen. It is always better to have some money.'

"She yelled so that I should hear:

"'No, I will not give it to you! As the man has had luncheon here, the least he can do is to pay your expenses for the day.'

"Boivin came back to fetch me. As I wished to be polite I bowed to the mistress of the house, stammering:

"'Madame—many thanks—kind welcome.'

"'That's all right,' she replied. 'But do not bring him back drunk, for you will have to answer to me, you know!'

"We set out. We had to cross a perfectly bare plain under the burning sun. I attempted to gather a flower along the road and gave a cry of pain. It had hurt my hand frightfully. They call these plants nettles. And, everywhere, there was a smell of manure, enough to turn your stomach.

"Boivin said, 'Have a little patience and we will reach the river bank.'

"We reached the river. Here there was an odor of mud and dirty water, and the sun blazed down on the water so that it burned my eyes. I begged Boivin to go under cover somewhere. He took me into a kind of shanty filled with men, a river boatmen's tavern.

"He said:

"'This does not look very grand, but it is very comfortable.'

"I was hungry. I ordered an omelet. But lo and behold, at the second glass of wine, that beggar,

Boivin, lost his head, and I understand why his wife gave him water diluted.

"He got up, declaimed, wanted to show his strength, interfered in a quarrel between two drunken men who were fighting, and, but for the landlord, who came to the rescue, we should both have been killed.

"I dragged him away, holding him up until we reached the first bush where I deposited him. I lay down beside him and, it seems, I fell asleep. We must certainly have slept a long time, for it was dark when I awoke. Boivin was snoring at my side. I shook him; he rose but he was still drunk, though a little less so.

"We set out through the darkness across the plain. Boivin said he knew the way. He made me turn to the left, then to the right, then to the left. We could see neither sky nor earth, and found ourselves lost in the midst of a kind of forest of wooden stakes, that came as high as our noses. It was a vineyard and these were the supports. There was not a single light on the horizon. We wandered about in this vineyard for about an hour or two, hesitating, reaching out our arms without finding any limit, for we kept retracing our steps.

"At length Boivin fell against a stake that tore his cheek and he remained in a sitting posture on the ground, uttering with all his might long and resounding hallos, while I screamed 'Help! Help!' as loud as I could, lighting candle-matches to show the way to our rescuers, and also to keep up my courage.

"At last a belated peasant heard us and put us on our right road. I took Boivin to his home, but as

I was leaving him on the threshold of his garden, the door opened suddenly and his wife appeared, a candle in her hand. She frightened me horribly.

"As soon as she saw her husband, whom she must have been waiting for since dark, she screamed, as she darted toward me:

"'Ah, scoundrel, I knew you would bring him back drunk!'

"My, how I made my escape, running all the way to the station, and as I thought the fury was pursuing me I shut myself in an inner room as the train was not due for half an hour.

"That is why I never married, and why I never go out of Paris."

A COWARD

IN society he was called "Handsome Signoles." His name was Vicomte Gontran-Joseph de Signoles.

An orphan, and possessed of an ample fortune, he cut quite a dash, as it is called. He had an attractive appearance and manner, could talk well, had a certain inborn elegance, an air of pride and nobility, a good mustache, and a tender eye, that always finds favor with women.

He was in great request at receptions, waltzed to perfection, and was regarded by his own sex with that smiling hostility accorded to the popular society man. He had been suspected of more than one love affair, calculated to enhance the reputation of a bachelor. He lived a happy, peaceful life—a life of physical and mental well-being. He had won considerable fame as a swordsman, and still more as a marksman.

"When the time comes for me to fight a duel," he said, "I shall choose pistols. With such a weapon I am sure to kill my man."

One evening, having accompanied two women friends of his with their husbands to the theatre, he invited them to take some ice cream at Tortoni's after the performance. They had been seated a few minutes in the restaurant when Signoles noticed that a man was staring persistently at one of the

ladies. She seemed annoyed, and lowered her eyes. At last she said to her husband:

"There's a man over there looking at me. I don't know him; do you?"

The husband, who had noticed nothing, glanced across at the offender, and said:

"No; not in the least."

His wife continued, half smiling, half angry:

"It's very tiresome! He quite spoils my ice cream."

The husband shrugged his shoulders.

"Nonsense! Don't take any notice of him. If we were to bother our heads about all the ill-mannered people we should have no time for anything else."

But the vicomte abruptly left his seat. He could not allow this insolent fellow to spoil an ice for a guest of his. It was for him to take cognizance of the offence, since it was through him that his friends had come to the restaurant. He went across to the man and said:

"Sir, you are staring at those ladies in a manner I cannot permit. I must ask you to desist from your rudeness."

The other replied:

"Let me alone, will you!"

"Take care, sir," said the vicomte between his teeth, "or you will force me to extreme measures."

The man replied with a single word—a foul word, which could be heard from one end of the restaurant to the other, and which startled every one there. All those whose backs were toward the two disputants turned round; all the others raised their heads; three waiters spun round on their heels like tops;

the two lady cashiers jumped, as if shot, then turned their bodies simultaneously, like two automata worked by the same spring.

There was dead silence. Then suddenly a sharp, crisp sound. The vicomte had slapped his adversary's face. Every one rose to interfere. Cards were exchanged.

When the vicomte reached home he walked rapidly up and down his room for some minutes. He was in a state of too great agitation to think connectedly. One idea alone possessed him: a duel. But this idea aroused in him as yet no emotion of any kind. He had done what he was bound to do; he had proved himself to be what he ought to be. He would be talked about, approved, congratulated. He repeated aloud, speaking as one does when under the stress of great mental disturbance:

"What a brute of a man!"

Then he sat down, and began to reflect. He would have to find seconds as soon as morning came. Whom should he choose? He bethought himself of the most influential and best-known men of his acquaintance. His choice fell at last on the Marquis de la Tour-Noire and Colonel Bourdin—a nobleman and a soldier. That would be just the thing. Their names would carry weight in the newspapers. He was thirsty, and drank three glasses of water, one after another; then he walked up and down again. If he showed himself brave, determined, prepared to face a duel in deadly earnest, his adversary would probably draw back and proffer excuses.

He picked up the card he had taken from his pocket and thrown on a table. He read it again, as

he had already read it, first at a glance in the restaurant, and afterward on the way home in the light of each gas lamp: "Georges Lamil, 51 Rue Moncey." That was all.

He examined closely this collection of letters, which seemed to him mysterious, fraught with many meanings. Georges Lamil! Who was the man? What was his profession? Why had he stared so at the woman? Was it not monstrous that a stranger, an unknown, should thus all at once upset one's whole life, simply because it had pleased him to stare rudely at a woman? And the vicomte once more repeated aloud:

"What a brute!"

Then he stood motionless, thinking, his eyes still fixed on the card. Anger rose in his heart against this scrap of paper—a resentful anger, mingled with a strange sense of uneasiness. It was a stupid business altogether! He took up a penknife which lay open within reach, and deliberately stuck it into the middle of the printed name, as if he were stabbing some one.

So he would have to fight! Should he choose swords or pistols?—for he considered himself as the insulted party. With the sword he would risk less, but with the pistol there was some chance of his adversary backing out. A duel with swords is rarely fatal, since mutual prudence prevents the combatants from fighting close enough to each other for a point to enter very deep. With pistols he would seriously risk his life; but, on the other hand, he might come out of the affair with flying colors, and without a duel, after all.

"I must be firm," he said. "The fellow will be afraid."

The sound of his own voice startled him, and he looked nervously round the room. He felt unstrung. He drank another glass of water, and then began undressing, preparatory to going to bed.

As soon as he was in bed he blew out the light and shut his eyes.

"I have all day to-morrow," he reflected, "for setting my affairs in order. I must sleep now, in order to be calm when the time comes."

He was very warm in bed, but he could not succeed in losing consciousness. He tossed and turned, remained for five minutes lying on his back, then changed to his left side, then rolled over to his right.

He was thirsty again, and rose to drink. Then a qualm seized him:

"Can it be possible that I am afraid?"

Why did his heart beat so uncontrollably at every well-known sound in his room? When the clock was about to strike, the prefatory grating of its spring made him start, and for several seconds he panted for breath, so unnerved was he.

He began to reason with himself on the possibility of such a thing:

"Could I by any chance be afraid?"

No, indeed; he could not be afraid, since he was resolved to proceed to the last extremity, since he was irrevocably determined to fight without flinching. And yet he was so perturbed in mind and body that he asked himself:

"Is it possible to be afraid in spite of one's self?"

And this doubt, this fearful question, took possession of him. If an irresistible power, stronger than his own will, were to quell his courage, what would happen? He would certainly go to the place appointed; his will would force him that far. But supposing, when there, he were to tremble or faint? And he thought of his social standing, his reputation, his name.

And he suddenly determined to get up and look at himself in the glass. He lighted his candle. When he saw his face reflected in the mirror he scarcely recognized it. He seemed to see before him a man whom he did not know. His eyes looked disproportionately large, and he was very pale.

He remained standing before the mirror. He put out his tongue, as if to examine the state of his health, and all at once the thought flashed into his mind:

"At this time the day after to-morrow I may be dead."

And his heart throbbed painfully.

"At this time the day after to-morrow I may be dead. This person in front of me, this 'I' whom I see in the glass, will perhaps be no more. What! Here I am, I look at myself, I feel myself to be alive —and yet in twenty-four hours I may be lying on that bed, with closed eyes, dead, cold, inanimate."

He turned round, and could see himself distinctly lying on his back on the couch he had just quitted. He had the hollow face and the limp hands of death.

Then he became afraid of his bed, and to avoid seeing it went to his smoking-room. He mechanically took a cigar, lighted it, and began walking back and forth. He was cold; he took a step toward the

bell, to wake his valet, but stopped with hand raised toward the bell rope.

"He would see that I am afraid!"

And, instead of ringing, he made a fire himself. His hands quivered nervously as they touched various objects. His head grew dizzy, his thoughts confused, disjointed, painful; a numbness seized his spirit, as if he had been drinking.

And all the time he kept on saying:

"What shall I do? What will become of me?"

His whole body trembled spasmodically; he rose, and, going to the window, drew back the curtains.

The day—a summer day—was breaking. The pink sky cast a glow on the city, its roofs, and its walls. A flush of light enveloped the awakened world, like a caress from the rising sun, and the glimmer of dawn kindled new hope in the breast of the vicomte. What a fool he was to let himself succumb to fear before anything was decided—before his seconds had interviewed those of Georges Lamil, before he even knew whether he would have to fight or not!

He bathed, dressed, and left the house with a firm step.

He repeated as he went:

"I must be firm—very firm. I must show that I am not afraid."

His seconds, the marquis and the colonel, placed themselves at his disposal, and, having shaken him warmly by the hand, began to discuss details.

"You want a serious duel?" asked the colonel.

"Yes—quite serious," replied the vicomte.

"You insist on pistols?" put in the marquis.

"Yes."

"Do you leave all the other arrangements in our hands?"

With a dry, jerky voice the vicomte answered:

"Twenty paces—at a given signal—the arm to be raised, not lowered—shots to be exchanged until one or other is seriously wounded."

"Excellent conditions," declared the colonel in a satisfied tone. "You are a good shot; all the chances are in your favor."

And they parted. The vicomte returned home to wait for them. His agitation, only temporarily allayed, now increased momentarily. He felt, in arms, legs and chest, a sort of trembling—a continuous vibration; he could not stay still, either sitting or standing. His mouth was parched, and he made every now and then a clicking movement of the tongue, as if to detach it from his palate.

He attempted to take luncheon, but could not eat. Then it occurred to him to seek courage in drink, and he sent for a decanter of rum, of which he swallowed, one after another, six small glasses.

A burning warmth, followed by a deadening of the mental faculties, ensued. He said to himself:

"I know how to manage. Now it will be all right!"

But at the end of an hour he had emptied the decanter, and his agitation was worse than ever. A mad longing possessed him to throw himself on the ground, to bite, to scream. Night fell.

A ring at the bell so unnerved him that he had not the strength to rise to receive his seconds.

He dared not even to speak to them, wish them good-day, utter a single word, lest his changed voice should betray him.

"All is arranged as you wished," said the colonel. "Your adversary claimed at first the privileges of the offended part; but he yielded almost at once, and accepted your conditions. His seconds are two military men."

"Thank you," said the vicomte.

The marquis added:

"Please excuse us if we do not stay now, for we have a good deal to see to yet. We shall want a reliable doctor, since the duel is not to end until a serious wound has been inflicted; and you know that bullets are not to be trifled with. We must select a spot near some house to which the wounded party can be carried if necessary. In fact, the arrangements will take us another two or three hours at least."

The vicomte articulated for the second time:

"Thank you."

"You're all right?" asked the colonel. "Quite calm?"

"Perfectly calm, thank you."

The two men withdrew.

When he was once more alone he felt as though he should go mad. His servant having lighted the lamps, he sat down at his table to write some letters. When he had traced at the top of a sheet of paper the words: "This is my last will and testament," he started from his seat, feeling himself incapable of connected thought, of decision in regard to anything.

So he was going to fight! He could no longer avoid it. What, then, possessed him? He wished to fight, he was fully determined to fight, and yet, in spite of all his mental effort, in spite of the exer-

tion of all his will power, he felt that he could not even preserve the strength necessary to carry him through the ordeal. He tried to conjure up a picture of the duel, his own attitude, and that of his enemy.

Every now and then his teeth chattered audibly. He thought he would read, and took down Châteauvillard's *Rules of Dueling*. Then he said:

"Is the other man practiced in the use of the pistol? Is he well known? How can I find out?"

He remembered Baron de Vaux's book on marksmen, and searched it from end to end. Georges Lamil was not mentioned. And yet, if he were not an adept, would he have accepted without demur such a dangerous weapon and such deadly conditions?

He opened a case of Gastinne Renettes which stood on a small table, and took from it a pistol. Next he stood in the correct attitude for firing, and raised his arm. But he was trembling from head to foot, and the weapon shook in his grasp.

Then he said to himself:

"It is impossible. I cannot fight like this."

He looked at the little black, death-spitting hole at the end of the pistol; he thought of dishonor, of the whispers at the clubs, the smiles in his friends' drawing-rooms, the contempt of women, the veiled sneers of the newspapers, the insults that would be hurled at him by cowards.

He still looked at the weapon, and raising the hammer, saw the glitter of the priming below it. The pistol had been left loaded by some chance, some oversight. And the discovery rejoiced him, he knew not why.

If he did not maintain, in presence of his opponent, the steadfast bearing which was so necessary to his honor, he would be ruined forever. He would be branded, stigmatized as a coward, hounded out of society! And he felt, he knew, that he could not maintain that calm, unmoved demeanor. And yet he was brave, since—the thought that followed was not even rounded to a finish in his mind; but, opening his mouth wide, he suddenly plunged the barrel of the pistol as far back as his throat, and pressed the trigger.

When the valet, alarmed at the report, rushed into the room he found his master lying dead upon his back. A spurt of blood had splashed the white paper on the table, and had made a great crimson stain beneath the words:

"This is my last will and testament."

MADAME HUSSON'S "ROSIER"

WE had just left Gisors, where I was awakened by hearing the name of the town called out by the guards, and I was dozing off again when a terrific shock threw me forward on top of a large lady who sat opposite me.

One of the wheels of the engine had broken, and the engine itself lay across the track. The tender and the baggage car were also derailed, and lay beside this mutilated engine, which rattled, groaned, hissed, puffed, sputtered, and resembled those horses that fall in the street with their flanks heaving, their breast palpitating, their nostrils steaming and their whole body trembling, but incapable of the slightest effort to rise and start off again.

There were no dead or wounded; only a few with bruises, for the train was not going at full speed. And we looked with sorrow at the great crippled iron creature that could not draw us along any more, and that blocked the track, perhaps for some time, for no doubt they would have to send to Paris for a special train to come to our aid.

It was then ten o'clock in the morning, and I at once decided to go back to Gisors for breakfast.

As I was walking along I said to myself:

"Gisors, Gisors—why, I know someone there!

Who is it? Gisors? Let me see, I have a friend in this town." A name suddenly came to my mind, "Albert Marambot." He was an old school friend whom I had not seen for at least twelve years, and who was practicing medicine in Gisors. He had often written, inviting me to come and see him, and I had always promised to do so, without keeping my word. But at last I would take advantage of this opportunity.

I asked the first passer-by:

"Do you know where Dr. Marambot lives?"

He replied, without hesitation, and with the drawling accent of the Normans:

"Rue Dauphine."

I presently saw, on the door of the house he pointed out, a large brass plate on which was engraved the name of my old chum. I rang the bell, but the servant, a yellow-haired girl who moved slowly, said with a stupid air:

"He isn't here, he isn't here."

I heard a sound of forks and of glasses and I cried:

"Hallo, Marambot!"

A door opened and a large man, with whiskers and a cross look on his face, appeared, carrying a dinner napkin in his hand.

I certainly should not have recognized him. One would have said he was forty-five at least, and, in a second, all the provincial life which makes one grow heavy, dull and old came before me. In a single flash of thought, quicker than the act of extending my hand to him, I could see his life, his manner of existence, his line of thought and his theories of things in general. I guessed at the pro-

longed meals that had rounded out his stomach, his after-dinner naps from the torpor of a slow indigestion aided by cognac, and his vague glances cast on the patient while he thought of the chicken that was roasting before the fire. His conversations about cooking, about cider, brandy and wine, the way of preparing certain dishes and of blending certain sauces were revealed to me at sight of his puffy red cheeks, his heavy lips and his lustreless eyes.

"You do not recognize me. I am Raoul Aubertin," I said.

He opened his arms and gave me such a hug that I thought he would choke me.

"You have not breakfasted, have you?"

"No."

"How fortunate! I was just sitting down to table and I have an excellent trout."

Five minutes later I was sitting opposite him at breakfast. I said:

"Are you a bachelor?"

"Yes, indeed."

"And do you like it here?"

"Time does not hang heavy; I am busy. I have patients and friends. I eat well, have good health, enjoy laughing and shooting. I get along."

"Is not life very monotonous in this little town?"

"No, my dear boy, not when one knows how to fill in the time. A little town, in fact, is like a large one. The incidents and amusements are less varied, but one makes more of them; one has fewer acquaintances, but one meets them more frequently. When you know all the windows in a street, each

one of them interests you and puzzles you more than a whole street in Paris.

"A little town is very amusing, you know, very amusing, very amusing. Why, take Gisors. I know it at the tips of my fingers, from its beginning up to the present time. You have no idea what a queer history it has."

"Do you belong to Gisors?"

"I? No. I come from Gournay, its neighbor and rival. Gournay is to Gisors what Lucullus was to Cicero. Here, everything is for glory; they say 'the proud people of Gisors.' At Gournay, everything is for the stomach; they say 'the chewers of Gournay.' Gisors despises Gournay, but Gournay laughs at Gisors. It is a very comical country, this."

I perceived that I was eating something very delicious, hard-boiled eggs wrapped in a covering of meat jelly flavored with herbs and put on ice for a few moments. I said as I smacked my lips to compliment Marambot:

"That is good."

He smiled.

"Two things are necessary, good jelly, which is hard to get, and good eggs. Oh, how rare good eggs are, with the yolks slightly reddish, and with a good flavor! I have two poultry yards, one for eggs and the other for chickens. I feed my laying hens in a special manner. I have my own ideas on the subject. In an egg, as in the meat of a chicken, in beef, or in mutton, in milk, in everything, one perceives, and ought to taste, the juice, the quintessence of all the food on which the animal has been

fed. How much better food we could have if more attention were paid to this!"

I laughed as I said:

"You are a gourmand?"

"Parbleu. It is only imbeciles who are not. One is a gourmand as one is an artist, as one is learned, as one is a poet. The sense of taste, my friend, is very delicate, capable of perfection, and quite as worthy of respect as the eye and the ear. A person who lacks this sense is deprived of an exquisite faculty, the faculty of discerning the quality of food, just as one may lack the faculty of discerning the beauties of a book or of a work of art; it means to be deprived of an essential organ, of something that belongs to higher humanity; it means to belong to one of those innumerable classes of the infirm, the unfortunate, and the fools of which our race is composed; it means to have the mouth of an animal, in a word, just like the mind of an animal. A man who cannot distinguish one kind of lobster from another; a herring—that admirable fish that has all the flavors, all the odors of the sea—from a mackerel or a whiting; and a Cresane from a Duchess pear, may be compared to a man who should mistake Balzac for Eugene Sue; a symphony of Beethoven for a military march composed by the bandmaster of a regiment; and the Apollo Belvidere for the statue of General de Blaumont.

"Who is General de Blaumont?"

"Oh, that's true, you do not know. It is easy to tell that you do not belong to Gisors. I told you just now, my dear boy, that they called the inhabitants of this town 'the proud people of Gisors,' and never was an epithet better deserved. But let

us finish breakfast first, and then I will tell you about our town and take you to see it."

He stopped talking every now and then while he slowly drank a glass of wine which he gazed at affectionately as he replaced the glass on the table.

It was amusing to see him, with a napkin tied around his neck, his cheeks flushed, his eyes eager, and his whiskers spreading round his mouth as it kept working.

He made me eat until I was almost choking. Then, as I was about to return to the railway station, he seized me by the arm and took me through the streets. The town, of a pretty, provincial type, commanded by its citadel, the most curious monument of military architecture of the seventh century to be found in France, overlooks, in its turn, a long, green valley, where the large Norman cows graze and ruminate in the pastures.

The doctor quoted:

"'Gisors, a town of 4,000 inhabitants in the department of Eure, mentioned in Cæsar's Commentaries: Cæsaris ostium, then Cæsartium, Cæsortium, Gisortium, Gisors.' I shall not take you to visit the old Roman encampment, the remains of which are still in existence."

I laughed and replied:

"My dear friend, it seems to me that you are affected with a special malady that, as a doctor, you ought to study; it is called the spirit of provincialism."

He stopped abruptly.

"The spirit of provincialism, my friend, is nothing but natural patriotism," he said. "I love my house, my town and my province because I discover

in them the customs of my own village; but if I love my country, if I become angry when a neighbor sets foot in it, it is because I feel that my home is in danger, because the frontier that I do not know is the high road to my province. For instance, I am a Norman, a true Norman; well, in spite of my hatred of the German and my desire for revenge, I do not detest them, I do not hate them by instinct as I hate the English, the real, hereditary natural enemy of the Normans; for the English traversed this soil inhabited by my ancestors, plundered and ravaged it twenty times, and my aversion to this perfidious people was transmitted to me at birth by my father. See, here is the statue of the general."

"What general?"

"General Blaumont! We had to have a statue. We are not 'the proud people of Gisors' for nothing! So we discovered General de Blaumont. Look in this bookseller's window."

He drew me towards the bookstore, where about fifteen red, yellow and blue volumes attracted the eye. As I read the titles, I began to laugh idiotically. They read:

Gisors, its origin, its future, by M. X. . . ., member of several learned societies; *History of Gisors,* by the Abbé A. . . .; *Gisors, from the time of Cæsar to the present day,* by M. B. . . ., Landowner; *Gisors and its environs,* by Doctor C. D. . . .; *The Glories of Gisors,* by a Discoverer.

"My friend," resumed Marambot, "not a year, not a single year, you understand, passes without a fresh history of Gisors being published here; we now have twenty-three."

"And the glories of Gisors?" I asked.

"Oh, I will not mention them all, only the principal ones. We had first General de Blaumont, then Baron Davillier, the celebrated ceramist who explored Spain and the Balearic Isles, and brought to the notice of collectors the wonderful Hispano-Arabic china. In literature we have a very clever journalist, now dead, Charles Brainne, and among those who are living, the very eminent editor of the *Nouvelliste de Rouen,* Charles Lapièrre . . . and many others, many others."

We were traversing a long street with a gentle incline, with a June sun beating down on it and driving the residents into their houses.

Suddenly there appeared at the farther end of the street a drunken man who was staggering along, with his head forward, his arms and legs limp. He would walk forward rapidly three, six, or ten steps and then stop. When these energetic movements landed him in the middle of the road he stopped short and swayed on his feet, hesitating between falling and a fresh start. Then he would dart off in any direction, sometimes falling against the wall of a house, against which he seemed to be fastened, as though he were trying to get in through the wall. Then he would suddenly turn round and look ahead of him, his mouth open and his eyes blinking in the sunlight, and getting away from the wall by a movement of the hips, he started off once more.

A little yellow dog, a half-starved cur, followed him, barking; stopping when he stopped, and starting off when he started.

"Hallo," said Marambot, "there is Madame Husson's 'Rosier.'"

"Madame Husson's 'Rosier,'" I exclaimed in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

The doctor began to laugh.

"Oh, that is what we call drunkards round here. The name comes from an old story which has now become a legend, although it is true in all respects."

"Is it an amusing story?"

"Very amusing."

"Well, then, tell it to me."

"I will."

There lived formerly in this town a very upright old lady who was a great guardian of morals and was called Mme. Husson. You know, I am telling you the real names and not imaginary ones. Mme. Husson took a special interest in good works, in helping the poor and encouraging the deserving. She was a little woman with a quick walk and wore a black wig. She was ceremonious, polite, on very good terms with the Almighty in the person of Abbé Malon, and had a profound horror, an inborn horror of vice, and, in particular, of the vice the Church calls lasciviousness. Any irregularity before marriage made her furious, exasperated her till she was beside herself.

Now, this was the period when they presented a prize as a reward of virtue to any girl in the environs of Paris who was found to be chaste. She was caled a Rosière, and Mme. Husson got the idea that she would institute a similar ceremony at Gisors. She spoke about it to Abbé Malon, who at once made out a list of candidates.

However, Mme. Husson had a servant, an old woman called Françoise, as upright as her mistress. As soon as the priest had left, madame called the servant and said:

"Here, Françoise, here are the girls whose names M. le curé has submitted to me for the prize of virtue; try and find out what reputation they bear in the district."

And Françoise set out. She collected all the scandal, all the stories, all the tattle, all the suspicions. That she might omit nothing, she wrote it all down together with her memoranda in her housekeeping book, and handed it each morning to Mme. Husson, who, after adjusting her spectacles on her thin nose, read as follows:

Bread..... four sous
Milk..... two sous
Butter..... eight sous

Malvina Levesque got into trouble last year with Mathurin Poilu.

Leg of mutton..... twenty-five sous
Salt..... one sou

Rosalie Vatinel was seen in the Riboudet woods with Cesaire Pienoir, by Mme. Onesime, the ironer, on July the 20th about dusk.

Radishes..... one sou
Vinegar..... two sous
Oxalic acid..... two sous

Josephine Durdent, who is not believed to have committed a fault, although she corresponds with young Oportun, who is in service in Rouen, and who sent her a present of a cap by diligence.

Not one came out unscathed in this rigorous inquisition. Françoise inquired of everyone, neighbors, drapers, the principal, the teaching sisters at school, and gathered the slightest details.

As there is not a girl in the world about whom gossips have not found something to say, there was

not found in all the countryside one young girl whose name was free from some scandal.

But Mme. Husson desired that the "Rosière" of Gisors, like Cæsar's wife, should be above suspicion, and she was horrified, saddened and in despair at the record in her servant's housekeeping account-book.

They then extended their circle of inquiries to the neighboring villages; but with no satisfaction.

They consulted the mayor. His candidates failed. Those of Dr. Barbesol were equally unlucky, in spite of the exactness of his scientific vouchers.

But one morning Françoise, on returning from one of her expeditions, said to her mistress:

"You see, madame, that if you wish to give a prize to anyone, there is only Isidore in all the country round."

Mme. Husson remained thoughtful. She knew him well, this Isidore, the son of Virginie the green-grocer. His proverbial virtue had been the delight of Gisors for several years, and served as an entertaining theme of conversation in the town, and of amusement to the young girls who loved to tease him. He was past twenty-one, was tall, awkward, slow and timid; helped his mother in the business, and spent his days picking over fruit and vegetables, seated on a chair outside the door.

He had an abnormal dread of a petticoat and cast down his eyes whenever a female customer looked at him smilingly, and this well-known timidity made him the butt of all the wags in the country.

Bold words, coarse expressions, indecent allusions, brought the color to his cheeks so quickly that Dr. Barbesol had nicknamed him "the thermometer of

modesty." Was he as innocent as he looked? ill-natured people asked themselves. Was it the mere presentiment of unknown and shameful mysteries or else indignation at the relations ordained as the concomitant of love that so strongly affected the son of Virginie the greengrocer? The urchins of the neighborhood as they ran past the shop would fling disgusting remarks at him just to see him cast down his eyes. The girls amused themselves by walking up and down before him, cracking jokes that made him go into the store. The boldest among them teased him to his face just to have a laugh, to amuse themselves, made appointments with him and proposed all sorts of things.

So Madame Husson had become thoughtful.

Certainly, Isidore was an exceptional case of notorious, unassailable virtue. No one, among the most sceptical, most incredulous, would have been able, would have dared, to suspect Isidore of the slightest infraction of any law of morality. He had never been seen in a café, never been seen at night on the street. He went to bed at eight o'clock and rose at four. He was a perfection, a pearl.

But Mme. Husson still hesitated. The idea of substituting a boy for a girl, a "rosier" for a rosière," troubled her, worried her a little, and she resolved to consult Abbé Malon.

The abbé responded:

"What do you desire to reward, madame? It is virtue, is it not, and nothing but virtue? What does it matter to you, therefore, if it is masculine or feminine? Virtue is eternal; it has neither sex nor country; it is 'Virtue.'"

Thus encouraged, Mme. Husson went to see the mayor.

He approved heartily.

"We will have a fine ceremony," he said. "And another year if we can find a girl as worthy as Isidore we will give the reward to her. It will even be a good example that we shall set to Nanterre. Let us not be exclusive; let us welcome all merit."

Isidore, who had been told about this, blushed deeply and seemed happy.

The ceremony was fixed for the 15th of August, the festival of the Virgin Mary and of the Emperor Napoleon. The municipality had decided to make an imposing ceremony and had built the platform on the couronneaux, a delightful extension of the ramparts of the old citadel where I will take you presently.

With the natural revulsion of public feeling, the virtue of Isidore, ridiculed hitherto, had suddenly become respected and envied, as it would bring him in five hundred francs besides a savings bank book, a mountain of consideration, and glory enough and to spare. The girls now regretted their frivolity, their ridicule, their bold manners; and Isidore, although still modest and timid, had now a little contented air that bespoke his internal satisfaction.

The evening before the 15th of August the entire Rue Dauphine was decorated with flags. Oh, I forgot to tell you why this street had been called Rue Dauphine.

It seems that the wife or mother of the dauphin, I do not remember which one, while visiting Gisors

had been fêted so much by the authorities that during a triumphal procession through the town she stopped before one of the houses in this street, halting the procession, and exclaimed:

"Oh, the pretty house! How I should like to go through it! To whom does it belong?"

They told her the name of the owner, who was sent for and brought, proud and embarrassed, before the princess. She alighted from her carriage, went into the house, wishing to go over it from top to bottom, and even shut herself in one of the rooms alone for a few seconds.

When she came out, the people, flattered at this honor paid to a citizen of Gisors, shouted "Long live the dauphine!" But a rhymester wrote some words to a refrain, and the street retained the title of her royal highness, for

> "The princess, in a hurry,
> Without bell, priest, or beadle,
> But with some water only,
> Had baptized it."

But to come back to Isidore.

They had scattered flowers all along the road as they do for processions at the Fête-Dieu, and the National Guard was present, acting on the orders of their chief, Commandant Desbarres, an old soldier of the Grand Army, who pointed with pride to the beard of a Cossack cut with a single sword stroke from the chin of its owner by the commandant during the retreat in Russia, and which hung beside the frame containing the cross of the Legion of Honor presented to him by the emperor himself.

The regiment that he commanded was, besides, a picked regiment celebrated all through the province, and the company of grenadiers of Gisors was called on to attend all important ceremonies for a distance of fifteen to twenty leagues. The story goes that Louis Philippe, while reviewing the militia of Eure, stopped in astonishment before the company from Gisors, exclaiming:

"Oh, who are those splendid grenadiers?"

"The grenadiers of Gisors," replied the general.

"I might have known it," murmured the king.

So Commandant Desbarres came at the head of his men, preceded by the band, to get Isidore in his mother's store.

After a little air had been played by the band beneath the windows, the "Rosier" himself appeared on the threshold. He was dressed in white duck from head to foot and wore a straw hat with a little bunch of orange blossoms as a cockade.

The question of his clothes had bothered Mme. Husson a good deal, and she hesitated some time between the black coat of those who make their first communion and an entire white suit. But Françoise, her counsellor, induced her to decide on the white suit, pointing out that the Rosier would look like a swan.

Behind him came his guardian, his godmother, Mme. Husson, in triumph. She took his arm to go out of the store, and the mayor placed himself on the other side of the Rosier. The drums beat. Commandant Desbarres gave the order "Present arms!" The procession resumed its march towards the church amid an immense crowd of people who had gathered from the neighboring districts.

After a short mass and an affecting discourse by Abbé Malon, they continued on their way to the couronneaux, where the banquet was served in a tent.

Before taking their seats at table, the mayor gave an address. This is it, word for word. I learned it by heart:

"Young man, a woman of means, beloved by the poor and respected by the rich, Mme. Husson, whom the whole country is thanking here, through me, had the idea, the happy and benevolent idea, of founding in this town a prize for virtue, which should serve as a valuable encouragement to the inhabitants of this beautiful country.

"You, young man, are the first to be rewarded in this dynasty of goodness and chastity. Your name will remain at the head of this list of the most deserving, and your life, understand me, your whole life, must correspond to this happy commencement. To-day, in presence of this noble woman, of these soldier-citizens who have taken up their arms in your honor, in presence of this populace, affected, assembled to applaud you, or, rather, to applaud virtue, in your person, you make a solemn contract with the town, with all of us, to continue until your death the excellent example of your youth.

"Do not forget, young man, that you are the first seed cast into this field of hope; give us the fruits that we expect of you."

The mayor advanced three steps, opened his arms and pressed Isidore to his heart.

The "Rosier" was sobbing without knowing why, from a confused emotion, from pride and a vague and happy feeling of tenderness.

Then the mayor placed in one hand a silk purse in which gold tingled—five hundred francs in gold! —and in his other hand a savings bank book. And he said in a solemn tone:

"Homage, glory and riches to virtue."

Commandant Desbarres shouted "Bravo!" the grenadiers vociferated, and the crowd applauded.

Mme. Husson wiped her eyes, in her turn. Then they all sat down at the table where the banquet was served.

The repast was magnificent and seemed interminable. One course followed another; yellow cider and red wine in fraternal contact blended in the stomach of the guests. The rattle of plates, the sound of voices, and of music softly played, made an incessant deep hum, and was dispersed abroad in the clear sky where the swallows were flying. Mme. Husson occasionally readjusted her black wig, which would slip over on one side, and chatted with Abbé Malon. The mayor, who was excited, talked politics with Commandant Desbarres, and Isidore ate, drank, as if he had never eaten or drunk before. He helped himself repeatedly to all the dishes, becoming aware for the first time of the pleasure of having one's belly full of good things which tickle the palate in the first place. He had let out a reef in his belt and, without speaking, and although he was a little uneasy at a wine stain on his white waistcoat, he ceased eating in order to take up his glass and hold it to his mouth as long as possible, to enjoy the taste slowly.

It was time for the toasts. They were many and loudly applauded. Evening was approaching and they had been at the table since noon. Fine, milky

vapors were already floating in the air in the valley, the light nightrobe of streams and meadows; the sun neared the horizon; the cows were lowing in the distance amid the mists of the pasture. The feast was over. They returned to Gisors. The procession, now disbanded, walked in detachments. Mme. Husson had taken Isidore's arm and was giving him a quantity of urgent, excellent advice.

They stopped at the door of the fruit store, and the "Rosier" was left at his mother's house. She had not come home yet. Having been invited by her family to celebrate her son's triumph, she had taken luncheon with her sister after having followed the procession as far as the banqueting tent.

So Isidore remained alone in the store, which was growing dark. He sat down on a chair, excited by the wine and by pride, and looked about him. Carrots, cabbages, and onions gave out their strong odor of vegetables in the closed room, that coarse smell of the garden blended with the sweet, penetrating odor of strawberries and the delicate, slight, evanescent fragrance of a basket of peaches.

The "Rosier" took one of these and ate it, although he was as full as an egg. Then, all at once, wild with joy, he began to dance about the store, and something rattled in his waistcoat.

He was surprised, and put his hand in his pocket and brought out the purse containing the five hundred francs, which he had forgotten in his agitation. Five hundred francs! What a fortune! He poured the gold pieces out on the counter and spread them out with his big hand with a slow, caressing touch so as to see them all at the same time. There were twenty-five, twenty-five round

gold pieces, all gold! They glistened on the wood in the dim light and he counted them over and over, one by one. Then he put them back in the purse, which he replaced in his pocket.

Who will ever know or who can tell what a terrible conflict took place in the soul of the "Rosier" between good and evil, the tumultuous attack of Satan, his artifices, the temptations which he offered to this timid virgin heart? What suggestions, what imaginations, what desires were not invented by the evil one to excite and destroy this chosen one? He seized his hat, Mme. Husson's saint, his hat, which still bore the little bunch of orange blossoms, and going out through the alley at the back of the house, he disappeared in the darkness.

Virginie, the fruiterer, on learning that her son had returned, went home at once, and found the house empty. She waited, without thinking anything about it at first; but at the end of a quarter of an hour she made inquiries. The neighbors had seen Isidore come home and had not seen him go out again. They began to look for him, but could not find him. His mother, in alarm, went to the mayor. The mayor knew nothing, except that he had left him at the door of his home. Mme. Husson had just retired when they informed her that her protégé had disappeared. She immediately put on her wig, dressed herself and went to Virginie's house. Virginie, whose plebeian soul was readily moved, was weeping copiously amid her cabbages, carrots and onions.

They feared some accident had befallen him. What could it be? Commandant Desbarres notified the police, who made a circuit of the town, and on

the high road to Pontoise they found the little bunch of orange blossoms. It was placed on a table around which the authorities were deliberating. The "Rosier" must have been the victim of some stratagem, some trick, some jealousy; but in what way? What means had been employed to kidnap this innocent creature, and with what object?

Weary of looking for him without any result, Virginie, alone, remained watching and weeping.

The following evening, when the coach passed by on its return from Paris, Gisors learned with astonishment that its "Rosier" had stopped the vehicle at a distance of about two hundred metres from the town, had climbed up on it and paid his fare, handing over a gold piece and receiving the change, and that he had quietly alighted in the centre of the great city.

There was great excitement all through the countryside. Letters passed between the mayor and the chief of police in Paris, but brought no result.

The days followed one another, a week passed.

Now, one morning, Dr. Barbesol, who had gone out early, perceived, sitting on a doorstep, a man dressed in a grimy linen suit, who was sleeping with his head leaning against the wall. He approached him and recognized Isidore. He tried to rouse him, but did not succeed in doing so. The ex-"Rosier" was in that profound, invincible sleep that is alarming, and the doctor, in surprise, went to seek assistance to help him in carrying the young man to Boncheval's drugstore. When they lifted him up they found an empty bottle under him, and when the doctor sniffed at it, he declared that it had contained brandy. That gave a suggestion as

to what treatment he would require. They succeeded in rousing him.

Isidore was drunk, drunk and degraded by a week of guzzling, drunk and so disgusting that a ragman would not have touched him. His beautiful white duck suit was a gray rag, greasy, muddy, torn, and destroyed, and he smelt of the gutter and of vice.

He was washed, sermonized, shut up, and did not leave the house for four days. He seemed ashamed and repentant. They could not find on him either his purse, containing the five hundred francs, or the bankbook, or even his silver watch, a sacred heirloom left by his father, the fruiterer.

On the fifth day he ventured into the Rue Dauphine. Curious glances followed him and he walked along with a furtive expression in his eyes and his head bent down. As he got outside the town towards the valley they lost sight of him; but two hours later he returned laughing and rolling against the walls. He was drunk, absolutely drunk.

Nothing could cure him.

Driven from home by his mother, he became a wagon driver, and drove the charcoal wagons for the Pougrisel firm, which is still in existence.

His reputation as a drunkard became so well known and spread so far that even at Evreux they talked of Mme. Husson's "Rosier," and the sots of the countryside have been given that nickname.

A good deed is never lost.

Dr. Marambot rubbed his hands as he finished his story. I asked:

"Did you know the 'Rosier'?"

"Yes. I had the honor of closing his eyes."

"What did he die of?"

"An attack of delirium tremens, of course."

We had arrived at the old citadel, a pile of ruined walls dominated by the enormous tower of St. Thomas of Canterbury and the one called the Prisoner's Tower.

Marambot told me the story of this prisoner, who, with the aid of a nail, covered the walls of his dungeon with sculptures, tracing the reflections of the sun as it glanced through the narrow slit of a loophole.

I also learned that Clothaire II had given the patrimony of Gisors to his cousin, Saint Romain, bishop of Rouen; that Gisors ceased to be the capital of the whole of Vexin after the treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte; that the town is the chief strategic centre of all that portion of France, and that in consequence of this advantage she was taken and retaken over and over again. At the command of William the Red, the eminent engineer, Robert de Bellesme, constructed there a powerful fortress that was attacked later by Louis le Gros, then by the Norman barons, was defended by Robert de Candos, was finally ceded to Louis le Gros by Geoffry Plantagenet, was retaken by the English in consequence of the treachery of the Knights-Templars, was contested by Philippe-Augustus and Richard the Lion-hearted, was set on fire by Edward III of England, who could not take the castle, was again taken by the English in 1419, restored later to Charles VIII by Richard de Marbury, was taken by the Duke of Calabria, occupied by the League, inhabited by Henry IV, etc., etc.

And Marambot, eager and almost eloquent, continued:

"What beggars, those English! And what sots, my boy; they are all 'Rosiers,' those hypocrites!"

Then, after a silence, stretching out his arm towards the tiny river that glistened in the meadows, he said:

"Did you know that Henry Monnier was one of the most untiring fishermen on the banks of the Epte?"

"No, I did not know it."

"And Bouffé, my boy, Bouffé was a painter on glass."

"You are joking!"

"No, indeed. How is it you do not know these things?"

THE ADOPTED SON

THE two cottages stood beside each other at the foot of a hill near a little seashore resort. The two peasants labored hard on the unproductive soil to rear their little ones, and each family had four.

Before the adjoining doors a whole troop of urchins played and tumbled about from morning till night. The two eldest were six years old, and the youngest were about fifteen months; the marriages, and afterward the births, having taken place nearly simultaneously in both families.

The two mothers could hardly distinguish their own offspring among the lot, and as for the fathers, they were altogether at sea. The eight names danced in their heads; they were always getting them mixed up; and when they wished to call one child, the men often called three names before getting the right one.

The first of the two cottages, as you came up from the bathing beach, Rolleport, was occupied by the Tuvaches, who had three girls and one boy; the other house sheltered the Vallins, who had one girl and three boys.

They all subsisted frugally on soup, potatoes and fresh air. At seven o'clock in the morning, then at noon, then at six o'clock in the evening, the housewives got their broods together to give them their

food, as the gooseherds collect their charges. The children were seated, according to age, before the wooden table, varnished by fifty years of use; the mouths of the youngest hardly reaching the level of the table. Before them was placed a bowl filled with bread, soaked in the water in which the potatoes had been boiled, half a cabbage and three onions; and the whole line ate until their hunger was appeased. The mother herself fed the smallest.

A small pot roast on Sunday was a feast for all; and the father on this day sat longer over the meal, repeating: "I wish we could have this every day."

One afternoon, in the month of August, a phaeton stopped suddenly in front of the cottages, and a young woman, who was driving the horses, said to the gentleman sitting at her side:

"Oh, look at all those children, Henri! How pretty they are, tumbling about in the dust, like that!"

The man did not answer, accustomed to these outbursts of admiration, which were a pain and almost a reproach to him. The young woman continued:

"I must hug them! Oh, how I should like to have one of them—that one there—the little tiny one!"

Springing down from the carriage, she ran toward the children, took one of the two youngest—a Tuvache child—and lifting it up in her arms, she kissed him passionately on his dirty cheeks, on his tousled hair daubed with earth, and on his little hands, with which he fought vigorously, to get away from the caresses which displeased him.

Then she got into the carriage again, and drove off at a lively trot. But she returned the following week, and seating herself on the ground, took the

youngster in her arms, stuffed him with cakes, gave candies to all the others, and played with them like a young girl, while the husband waited patiently in the carriage.

She returned again; made the acquaintance of the parents, and reappeared every day with her pockets full of dainties and pennies.

Her name was Madame Henri d'Hubières.

One morning, on arriving, her husband alighted with her, and without stopping to talk to the children, who now knew her well, she entered the farmer's cottage.

They were busy chopping wood for the fire. They rose to their feet in surprise, brought forward chairs, and waited expectantly.

Then the woman, in a broken, trembling voice, began:

"My good people, I have come to see you, because I should like—I should like to take—your little boy with me——"

The country people, too bewildered to think, did not answer.

She recovered her breath, and continued: "We are alone, my husband and I. We would keep it. Are you willing?"

The peasant woman began to understand. She asked:

"You want to take Charlot from us? Oh, no, indeed!"

Then M. d'Hubières intervened:

"My wife has not made her meaning clear. We wish to adopt him, but he will come back to see you. If he turns out well, as there is every reason to expect, he will be our heir. If we, perchance, should

have children, he will share equally with them; but if he should not reward our care, we should give him, when he comes of age, a sum of twenty thousand francs, which shall be deposited immediately in his name, with a lawyer. As we have thought also of you, we should pay you, until your death, a pension of one hundred francs a month. Do you understand me?"

The woman had arisen, furious.

"You want me to sell you Charlot? Oh, no, that's not the sort of thing to ask of a mother! Oh, no! That would be an abomination!"

The man, grave and deliberate, said nothing; but approved of what his wife said by a continued nodding of his head.

Madame d'Hubières, in dismay, began to weep; turning to her husband, with a voice full of tears, the voice of a child used to having all its wishes gratified, she stammered:

"They will not do it, Henri, they will not do it."

Then he made a last attempt: "But, my friends, think of the child's future, of his happiness, of——"

The peasant woman, however, exasperated, cut him short:

"It's all considered! It's all understood! Get out of here, and don't let me see you again—the idea of wanting to take away a child like that!"

Madame d'Hubières remembered that there were two children, quite little, and she asked, through her tears, with the tenacity of a wilful and spoiled woman:

"But is the other little one not yours?"

Father Tuvache answered: "No, it is our neighbors'. You can go to them if you wish." And he

went back into his house, whence resounded the indignant voice of his wife.

The Vallins were at table, slowly eating slices of bread which they parsimoniously spread with a little rancid butter on a plate between the two.

M. d'Hubières recommenced his proposals, but with more insinuations, more oratorical precautions, more shrewdness.

The two country people shook their heads, in sign of refusal, but when they learned that they were to have a hundred francs a month, they considered the matter, consulting one another by glances, much disturbed. They kept silent for a long time, tortured, hesitating. At last the woman asked: "What do you say to it, man?" In a weighty tone he said: "I say that it's not to be despised."

Madame d'Hubières, trembling with anguish, spoke of the future of their child, of his happiness, and of the money which he could give them later.

The peasant asked: "This pension of twelve hundred francs, will it be promised before a lawyer?"

M. d'Hubières responded: "Why, certainly, beginning with to-morrow."

The woman, who was thinking it over, continued:

"A hundred francs a month is not enough to pay for depriving us of the child. That child would be working in a few years; we must have a hundred and twenty francs."

Tapping her foot with impatience, Madame d'Hubières granted it at once, and, as she wished to carry off the child with her, she gave a hundred francs extra, as a present, while her husband drew up a paper. And the young woman, radiant, car-

ried off the howling brat, as one carries away a wished-for knick-knack from a shop.

The Tuvaches, from their door, watched her departure, silent, serious, perhaps regretting their refusal.

Nothing more was heard of little Jean Vallin. The parents went to the lawyer every month to collect their hundred and twenty francs. They had quarrelled with their neighbors, because Mother Tuvache grossly insulted them, continually, repeating from door to door that one must be unnatural to sell one's child; that it was horrible, disgusting, bribery. Sometimes she would take her Charlot in her arms, ostentatiously exclaiming, as if he understood:

"I didn't sell *you,* I didn't! I didn't sell *you,* my little one! I'm not rich, but I don't sell my children!"

The Vallins lived comfortably, thanks to the pension. That was the cause of the unappeasable fury of the Tuvaches, who had remained miserably poor. Their eldest went away to serve his time in the army; Charlot alone remained to labor with his old father, to support the mother and two younger sisters.

He had reached twenty-one years when, one morning, a brilliant carriage stopped before the two cottages. A young gentleman, with a gold watch-chain, got out, giving his hand to an aged, white-haired lady. The old lady said to him: "It is there, my child, at the second house." And he entered the house of the Vallins as though at home.

The old mother was washing her aprons; the in-

firm father slumbered at the chimney-corner. Both raised their heads, and the young man said:

"Good-morning, papa; good-morning, mamma!"

They both stood up, frightened! In a flutter, the peasant woman dropped her soap into the water, and stammered:

"Is it you, my child? Is it you, my child?"

He took her in his arms and hugged her, repeating: "Good-morning, mamma," while the old man, all a-tremble, said, in his calm tone which he never lost: "Here you are, back again, Jean," as if he had just seen him a month ago.

When they had got to know one another again, the parents wished to take their boy out in the neighborhood, and show him. They took him to the mayor, to the deputy, to the *curé,* and to the schoolmaster.

Charlot, standing on the threshold of his cottage, watched him pass.

In the evening, at supper, he said to the old people: "You must have been stupid to let the Vallins' boy be taken."

The mother answered, obstinately: "I wouldn't sell *my* child."

The father remained silent. The son continued:

"It is unfortunate to be sacrificed like that."

Then Father Tuvache, in an angry tone, said:

"Are you going to reproach us for having kept you?" And the young man said, brutally:

"Yes, I reproach you for having been such fools. Parents like you make the misfortune of their children. You deserve that I should leave you."

The old woman wept over her plate. She moaned, as she swallowed the spoonfuls of soup, half of

which she spilled: "One may kill one's self to bring up children!"

Then the boy said, roughly: "I'd rather not have been born than be what I am. When I saw the other, my heart stood still. I said to myself: 'See what I should have been now!'" He got up: "See here, I feel that I would do better not to stay here, because I would throw it up to you from morning till night, and I would make your life miserable. I'll never forgive you for that!"

The two old people were silent, downcast, in tears.

He continued: "No, the thought of that would be too much. I'd rather look for a living somewhere else."

He opened the door. A sound of voices came in at the door. The Vallins were celebrating the return of their child.

TOINE

HE was known for thirty miles round was father Toine—fat Toine, Toine-my-extra, Antoine Mâcheblé, nicknamed Burnt-Brandy —the innkeeper of Tournevent.

It was he who had made famous this hamlet buried in a niche in the valley that led down to the sea, a poor little peasants' hamlet consisting of ten Norman cottages surrounded by ditches and trees.

The houses were hidden behind a curve which had given the place the name of Tournevent. It seemed to have sought shelter in this ravine overgrown with grass and rushes, from the keen, salt sea wind—the ocean wind that devours and burns like fire, that drys up and withers like the sharpest frost of winter, just as birds seek shelter in the furrows of the fields in time of storm.

But the whole hamlet seemed to be the property of Antoine Mâcheblé, nicknamed Burnt-Brandy, who was called also Toine, or Toine-My-Extra-Special, the latter in consequence of a phrase current in his mouth:

"My Extra-Special is the best in France."

His "Extra-Special" was, of course, his cognac.

For the last twenty years he had served the whole countryside with his Extra-Special and his "Burnt-

Brandy," for whenever he was asked: "What shall I drink, Toine?" he invariably answered: "A burnt-brandy, my son-in-law; that warms the inside and clears the head—there's nothing better for your body."

He called everyone his son-in-law, though he had no daughter, either married or to be married.

Well known indeed was Toine Burnt-Brandy, the stoutest man in all Normandy. His little house seemed ridiculously small, far too small and too low to hold him; and when people saw him standing at his door, as he did all day long, they asked one another how he could possibly get through the door. But he went in whenever a customer appeared, for it was only right that Toine should be invited to take his thimbleful of whatever was drunk in his wine shop.

His inn bore the sign: "The Friends' Meeting-Place"—and old Toine was, indeed, the friend of all. His customers came from Fécamp and Montvilliers, just for the fun of seeing him and hearing him talk; for fat Toine would have made a tombstone laugh. He had a way of chaffing people without offending them, or of winking to express what he didn't say, of slapping his thighs when he was merry in such a way as to make you hold your sides, laughing. And then, merely to see him drink was a curiosity. He drank everything that was offered him, his roguish eyes twinkling, both with the enjoyment of drinking and at the thought of the money he was taking in. His was a double pleasure: first, that of drinking; and second, that of piling up the cash.

You should have heard him quarrelling with his

wife! It was worth paying for to see them together. They had wrangled all the thirty years they had been married; but Toine was good-humored, while his better-half grew angry. She was a tall peasant woman, who walked with long steps like a stork, and had a head resembling that of an angry screech-owl. She spent her time rearing chickens in a little poultry-yard behind the inn, and she was noted for her success in fattening them for the table.

Whenever the gentry of Fécamp gave a dinner they always had at least one of Madame Toine's chickens to be in the fashion.

But she was born ill-tempered, and she went through life in a mood of perpetual discontent. Annoyed at everyone, she seemed to be particularly annoyed at her husband. She disliked his gaiety, his reputation, his rude health, his embonpoint. She treated him as a good-for-nothing creature because he earned his money without working, and as a glutton because he ate and drank as much as ten ordinary men; and not a day went by without her declaring spitefully:

"You'd be better in the stye along with the pigs! You're so fat it makes me sick to look at you!"

And she would shout in his face:

"Wait! Wait a bit! We'll see! You'll burst one of these fine days like a sack of corn—you old bloat, you!"

Toine would laugh heartily, patting his corpulent person, and replying:

"Well, well, old hen, why don't you fatten up your chickens like that? Just try!"

And, rolling his sleeves back from his enormous arm, he said:

"That would make a fine wing now, wouldn't it?"

And the customers, doubled up with laughter, would thump the table with their fists and stamp their feet on the floor.

The old woman, mad with rage, would repeat:

"Wait a bit! Wait a bit! You'll see what'll happen. He'll burst like a sack of grain!"

And off she would go, amid the jeers and laughter of the drinkers.

Toine was, in fact, an astonishing sight, he was so fat, so heavy, so red. He was one of those enormous beings with whom Death seems to be amusing himself—playing perfidious tricks and pranks, investing with an irresistibly comic air his slow work of destruction. Instead of manifesting his approach, as with others, in white hairs, in emaciation, in wrinkles, in the gradual collapse which makes the onlookers say: "Gad! how he has changed!" he took a malicious pleasure in fattening Toine, in making him monstrous and absurd, in tingeing his face with a deep crimson, in giving him the appearance of superhuman health, and the changes he inflicts on all were in the case of Toine laughable, comic, amusing, instead of being painful and distressing to witness.

"Wait a bit! Wait a bit!" said his wife. "You'll see."

At last Toine had an apoplectic fit, and was paralyzed in consequence. The giant was put to bed in the little room behind the partition of the drinking-room that he might hear what was said and talk to

his friends, for his head was quite clear although his enormous body was helplessly inert. It was hoped at first that his immense legs would regain some degree of power; but this hope soon disappeared, and Toine spent his days and nights in the bed, which was only made up once a week, with the help of four neighbors, who lifted the innkeeper, each holding a limb, while his mattress was turned.

He kept his spirits, nevertheless; but his gaiety was of a different kind—more timid, more humble; and he lived in a constant, childlike fear of his wife, who grumbled from morning till night:

"Look at him there—the great glutton! the good-for-nothing creature, the old boozer! Serve him right, serve him right!"

He no longer answered her. He contented himself with winking behind the old woman's back, and turning over on his other side—the only movement of which he was now capable. He called this exercise a "tack to the north" or a "tack to the south."

His great distraction nowadays was to listen to the conversations in the bar, and to shout through the wall when he recognized a friend's voice:

"Hallo, my son-in-law! Is that you, Célestin?"

And Célestin Maloisel answered:

"Yes, it's me, Toine. Are you getting about again yet, old fellow?"

"Not exactly getting about," answered Toine. "But I haven't grown thin; my carcass is still good."

Soon he got into the way of asking his intimates into his room to keep him company, although it grieved him to see that they had to drink without him. It pained him to the quick that his customers should be drinking without him.

"That's what hurts worst of all," he would say —"that I cannot drink my Extra-Special any more. I can put up with everything else, but going without drink is the very deuce."

Then his wife's screech-owl face would appear at the window, and she would break in with the words:

"Look at him! Look at him now, the good-for-nothing wretch! I've got to feed him and wash him just as if he were a pig!"

And when the old woman had gone, a cock with red feathers would sometimes fly up to the window sill and looking into the room with his round inquisitive eye, would begin to crow loudly. Occasionally, too, a few hens would flutter as far as the foot of the bed, seeking crumbs on the floor. Toine's friends soon deserted the drinking room to come and chat every afternoon beside the invalid's bed. Helpless though he was, the jovial Toine still provided them with amusement. He would have made the devil himself laugh. Three men were regular in their attendance at the bedside: Célestin Maloisel, a tall, thin fellow, somewhat gnarled, like the trunk of an apple-tree; Prosper Horslaville, a withered little man with a ferret nose, cunning as a fox; and Césaire Paumelle, who never spoke, but who enjoyed Toine's society all the same.

They brought a plank from the yard, propped it upon the edge of the bed, and played dominoes from two till six.

But Toine's wife soon became insufferable. She could not endure that her fat, lazy husband should amuse himself at games while lying in his bed; and whenever she caught him beginning a game she pounced furiously on the dominoes, overturned the

plank, and carried all away into the bar, declaring that it was quite enough to have to feed that fat, lazy pig without seeing him amusing himself, as if to annoy poor people who had to work hard all day long.

Célestin Maloisel and Césaire Paumelle bent their heads to the storm, but Prosper Horslaville egged on the old woman, and was only amused at her wrath.

One day, when she was more angry than usual, he said:

"Do you know what I'd do if I were you?"

She fixed her owl's eyes on him, and waited for his next words.

Prosper went on:

"Your man is as hot as an oven, and he never leaves his bed—well, I'd make him hatch some eggs."

She was struck dumb at the suggestion, thinking that Prosper could not possibly be in earnest. But he continued:

"I'd put five under one arm, and five under the other, the same day that I set a hen. They'd all come out at the same time; then I'd take your husband's chickens to the hen to bring up with her own. You'd rear a fine lot that way."

"Could it be done?" asked the astonished old woman.

"Could it be done?" echoed the man. "Why not? Since eggs can be hatched in a warm box why shouldn't they be hatched in a warm bed?"

She was struck by this reasoning, and went away soothed and reflective.

A week later she entered Toine's room with her apron full of eggs, and said:

"I've just put the yellow hen on ten eggs. Here are ten for you; try not to break them."

"What do you want?" asked the amazed Toine.

"I want you to hatch them, you lazy creature!" she answered.

He laughed at first; then, finding she was serious, he got angry, and refused absolutely to have the eggs put under his great arms, that the warmth of his body might hatch them.

But the old woman declared wrathfully:

"You'll get no dinner as long as you won't have them. You'll see what'll happen."

Toine was uneasy, but answered nothing.

When twelve o'clock struck, he called out:

"Hullo, mother, is the soup ready?"

"There's no soup for you, lazy-bones," cried the old woman from her kitchen.

He thought she must be joking, and waited a while. Then he begged, implored, swore, "tacked to the north" and "tacked to the south," and beat on the wall with his fists, but had to consent at last to five eggs being placed against his left side; after which he had his soup.

When his friends arrived that afternoon they thought he must be ill, he seemed so constrained and queer.

They started the daily game of dominoes. But Toine appeared to take no pleasure in it, and reached forth his hand very slowly, and with great precaution.

"What's wrong with your arm?" asked Horslaville.

"I have a sort of stiffness in the shoulder," answered Toine.

Suddenly they heard people come into the inn. The players were silent.

It was the mayor with the deputy. They ordered two glasses of Extra-Special, and began to discuss local affairs. As they were talking in somewhat low tones Toine wanted to put his ear to the wall, and, forgetting all about his eggs, he made a sudden "tack to the north," which had the effect of plunging him into the midst of an omelette.

At the loud oath he swore his wife came hurrying into the room, and, guessing what had happened, stripped the bedclothes from him with lightning rapidity. She stood at first without moving or uttering a syllable, speechless with indignation at sight of the yellow poultice sticking to her husband's side.

Then, trembling with fury, she threw herself on the paralytic, showering on him blows such as those with which she cleaned her linen on the seashore. Toine's three friends were choking with laughter, coughing, spluttering and shouting, and the fat innkeeper himself warded his wife's attacks with all the prudence of which he was capable, that he might not also break the five eggs at his other side.

Toine was conquered. He had to hatch eggs, he had to give up his games of dominoes and renounce movement of any sort, for the old woman angrily deprived him of food whenever he broke an egg.

He lay on his back, with eyes fixed on the ceiling, motionless, his arms raised like wings, warming against his body the rudimentary chickens enclosed in their white shells.

He spoke now only in hushed tones, as if he

feared a noise as much as motion, and he took a feverish interest in the yellow hen who was accomplishing in the poultry-yard the same task as he.

"Has the yellow hen eaten her food all right?" he would ask his wife.

And the old woman went from her fowls to her husband, and from her husband to her fowls, devoured by anxiety as to the welfare of the little chickens who were maturing in the bed and in the nest.

The country people who knew the story came, agog with curiosity, to ask news of Toine. They entered his room on tiptoe, as one enters a sick-chamber, and asked:

"Well! how goes it?"

"All right," said Toine; "only it keeps me fearfully hot."

One morning his wife entered in a state of great excitement, and declared:

"The yellow hen has seven chickens! Three of the eggs were addled."

Toine's heart beat painfully. How many would he have?

"Will it soon be over?" he asked, with the anguish of a woman who is about to become a mother.

"It's to be hoped so!" answered the old woman crossly, haunted by fear of failure.

They waited. Friends of Toine who had got wind that his time was drawing near arrived, and filled the little room.

Nothing else was talked about in the neighboring cottages. Inquirers asked one another for news as they stood at their doors.

About three o'clock Toine fell asleep. He slumbered half his time nowadays. He was suddenly awakened by an unaccustomed tickling under his right arm. He put his left hand on the spot, and seized a little creature covered with yellow down, which fluttered in his hand.

His emotion was so great that he cried out, and let go his hold of the chicken, which ran over his chest. The bar was full of people at the time. The customers rushed to Toine's room, and made a circle round him as they would round a travelling showman; while Madame Toine picked up the chicken, which had taken refuge under her husband's beard.

No one spoke, so great was the tension. It was a warm April day. Outside the window the yellow hen could be heard calling to her newly-fledged brood.

Toine, who was perspiring with emotion and anxiety, murmured:

"I have another now—under the left arm."

His wife plunged her great bony hand into the bed, and pulled out a second chicken with all the care of a midwife.

The neighbors wanted to see it. It was passed from one to another, and examined as if it were a phenomenon.

For twenty minutes no more hatched out, then four emerged at the same moment from their shells.

There was a great commotion among the lookers-on. And Toine smiled with satisfaction, beginning to take pride in this unusual sort of paternity. There were not many like him! Truly, he was a remarkable specimen of humanity!

"That makes six!" he declared. "Great heavens, what a christening we'll have!"

And a loud laugh rose from all present. Newcomers filled the bar. They asked one another:

"How many are there?"

"Six."

Toine's wife took this new family to the hen, who clucked loudly, bristled her feathers, and spread her wings wide to shelter her growing brood of little ones.

"There's one more!" cried Toine.

He was mistaken. There were three! It was an unalloyed triumph! The last chicken broke through its shell at seven o'clock in the evening. All the eggs were good! And Toine, beside himself with joy, his brood hatched out, exultant, kissed the tiny creature on the back, almost suffocating it. He wanted to keep it in his bed until morning, moved by a mother's tenderness toward the tiny being which he had brought to life, but the old woman carried it away like the others, turning a deaf ear to her husband's entreaties.

The delighted spectators went off to spread the news of the event, and Horslaville, who was the last to go, asked:

"You'll invite me when the first is cooked, won't you, Toine?"

At this idea a smile overspread the fat man's face, and he answered:

"Certainly I'll invite you, my son-in-law."

THE SPASM

THE hotel guests slowly entered the dining-room and took their places. The waiters did not hurry themselves, in order to give the late comers a chance and thus avoid the trouble of bringing in the dishes a second time. The old bathers, the habitués, whose season was almost over, glanced, gazed toward the door whenever it opened, to see what new faces might appear.

This is the principal distraction of watering places. People look forward to the dinner hour in order to inspect each day's new arrivals, to find out who they are, what they do, and what they think. We always have a vague desire to meet pleasant people, to make agreeable acquaintances, perhaps to meet with a love adventure. In this life of elbowings, unknown strangers assume an extreme importance. Curiosity is aroused, sympathy is ready to exhibit itself, and sociability is the order of the day.

We cherish antipathies for a week and friendships for a month; we see people with different eyes, when we view them through the medium of acquaintanceship at watering places. We discover in men suddenly, after an hour's chat, in the evening after dinner, under the trees in the park where the healing spring bubbles up, a high intelligence and astonishing merits, and a month afterward we have

completely forgotten these new friends, who were so fascinating when we first met them.

Permanent and serious ties are also formed here sooner than anywhere else. People see each other every day; they become acquainted very quickly, and their affection is tinged with the sweetness and unrestraint of long-standing intimacies. We cherish in after years the dear and tender memories of those first hours of friendship, the memory of those first conversations in which a soul was unveiled, of those first glances which interrogate and respond to questions and secret thoughts which the mouth has not as yet uttered, the memory of that first cordial confidence, the memory of that delightful sensation of opening our hearts to those who seem to open theirs to us in return.

And the melancholy of watering places, the monotony of days that are all alike, proves hourly an incentive to this heart expansion.

* * * * * * *

Well, this evening, as on every other evening, we awaited the appearance of strange faces.

Only two appeared, but they were very remarkable, a man and a woman—father and daughter. They immediately reminded me of some of Edgar Poe's characters; and yet there was about them a charm, the charm associated with misfortune. I looked upon them as the victims of fate. The man was very tall and thin, rather stooped, with perfectly white hair, too white for his comparatively youthful physiognomy; and there was in his bearing and in his person that austerity peculiar to Protestants. The daughter, who was probably twenty-four or twenty-five, was small in stature, and

was also very thin, very pale, and she had the air of one who was worn out with utter lassitude. We meet people like this from time to time, who seem too weak for the tasks and the needs of daily life, too weak to move about, to walk, to do all that we do every day. She was rather pretty, with a transparent, spiritual beauty. And she ate with extreme slowness, as if she were almost incapable of moving her arms.

It must have been she, assuredly, who had come to take the waters.

They sat facing me, on the opposite side of the table; and I at once noticed that the father had a very singular, nervous twitching.

Every time he wanted to reach an object, his hand described a sort of zigzag before it succeeded in reaching what it was in search of, and after a little while this movement annoyed me so that I turned aside my head in order not to see it.

I noticed, too, that the young girl, during meals, wore a glove on her left hand.

After dinner I went for a stroll in the park of the bathing establishment. This led toward the little Auvergnese station of Châtel-Guyon, hidden in a gorge at the foot of the high mountain, from which flowed so many boiling springs, arising from the deep bed of extinct volcanoes. Over yonder, above our heads, the domes of extinct craters lifted their ragged peaks above the rest in the long mountain chain. For Châtel-Guyon is situated at the entrance to the land of mountain domes.

Beyond it stretches out the region of peaks, and, farther on again, the region of precipitous summits.

The "Puy de Dôme" is the highest of the domes,

the Peak of Sancy is the loftiest of the peaks, and Cantal is the most precipitous of these mountain heights.

It was a very warm evening, and I was walking up and down a shady path, listening to the opening strains of the Casino band, which was playing on an elevation overlooking the park.

And I saw the father and the daughter advancing slowly in my direction. I bowed as one bows to one's hotel companions at a watering place; and the man, coming to a sudden halt, said to me:

"Could you not, monsieur, tell us of a nice walk to take, short, pretty, and not steep; and pardon my troubling you?"

I offered to show them the way toward the valley through which the little river flowed, a deep valley forming a gorge between two tall, craggy, wooded slopes.

They gladly accepted my offer.

And we talked, naturally, about the virtue of the waters.

"Oh," he said, "my daughter has a strange malady, the seat of which is unknown. She suffers from incomprehensible nervous attacks. At one time the doctors think she has an attack of heart disease, at another time they imagine it is some affection of the liver, and at another they declare it to be a disease of the spine. To-day this protean malady, that assumes a thousand forms and a thousand modes of attack, is attributed to the stomach, which is the great caldron and regulator of the body. This is why we have come here. For my part, I am rather inclined to think it is the nerves. In any case it is very sad."

Immediately the remembrance of the violent spasmodic movement of his hand came back to my mind, and I asked him:

"But is this not the result of heredity? Are not your own nerves somewhat affected?"

He replied calmly:

"Mine? Oh, no—my nerves have always been very steady."

Then, suddenly, after a pause, he went on:

"Ah! You were alluding to the jerking movement of my hand every time I try to reach for anything? This arises from a terrible experience which I had. Just imagine, this daughter of mine was actually buried alive!"

I could only utter, "Ah!" so great were my astonishment and emotion.

* * * * * * *

He continued:

"Here is the story. It is simple. Juliette had been subject for some time to serious attacks of the heart. We believed that she had disease of that organ, and were prepared for the worst.

"One day she was carried into the house cold, lifeless, dead. She had fallen down unconscious in the garden. The doctor certified that life was extinct. I watched by her side for a day and two nights. I laid her with my own hands in the coffin, which I accompanied to the cemetery, where she was deposited in the family vault. It is situated in the very heart of Lorraine.

"I wished to have her interred with her jewels, bracelets, necklaces, rings, all presents which she had received from me, and wearing her first ball dress.

"You may easily imagine my state of mind when I re-entered our home. She was the only one I had, for my wife had been dead for many years. I found my way to my own apartment in a half-distracted condition, utterly exhausted, and sank into my easy-chair, without the capacity to think or the strength to move. I was nothing better now than a suffering, vibrating machine, a human being who had, as it were, been flayed alive; my soul was like an open wound.

"My old valet, Prosper, who had assisted me in placing Juliette in her coffin, and aided me in preparing her for her last sleep, entered the room noiselessly, and asked:

"'Does monsieur want anything?'

"I merely shook my head in reply.

"'Monsieur is wrong,' he urged. 'He will injure his health. Would monsieur like me to put him to bed?'

"I answered: 'No, let me alone!'

"And he left the room.

"I know not how many hours slipped away. Oh, what a night, what a night! It was cold. My fire had died out in the huge grate; and the wind, the winter wind, an icy wind, a winter hurricane, blew with a regular, sinister noise against the windows.

"How many hours slipped away? There I was without sleeping, powerless, crushed, my eyes wide open, my legs stretched out, my body limp, inanimate, and my mind torpid with despair. Suddenly the great doorbell, the great bell of the vestibule, rang out.

"I started so that my chair cracked under me. The solemn, ponderous sound vibrated through the

empty country house as through a vault. I turned round to see what the hour was by the clock. It was just two in the morning. Who could be coming at such an hour?

"And, abruptly, the bell again rang twice. The servants, without doubt, were afraid to get up. I took a wax candle and descended the stairs. I was on the point of asking: 'Who is there?'

"Then I felt ashamed of my weakness, and I slowly drew back the heavy bolts. My heart was throbbing wildly. I was frightened. I opened the door brusquely, and in the darkness I distinguished a white figure, standing erect, something that resembled an apparition.

"I recoiled, petrified with horror, faltering:

"'Who—who—who are you?'

"A voice replied:

"'It is I, father.'

"It was my daughter.

"I really thought I must be mad, and I retreated backward before this advancing spectre. I kept moving away, making a sign with my hand, as if to drive the phantom away, that gesture which you have noticed—that gesture which has remained with me ever since.

"'Do not be afraid, papa,' said the apparition. 'I was not dead. Somebody tried to steal my rings and cut one of my fingers; the blood began to flow, and that restored me to life.'

"And, in fact, I could see that her hand was covered with blood.

"I fell on my knees, choking with sobs and with a rattling in my throat.

"Then, when I had somewhat collected my

thoughts, though I was still so bewildered that I scarcely realized the awesome happiness that had befallen me, I made her go up to my room and sit down in my easy-chair; then I rang excitedly for Prosper to get him to rekindle the fire and to bring some wine, and to summon assistance.

"The man entered, stared at my daughter, opened his mouth with a gasp of alarm and stupefaction, and then fell back dead.

"It was he who had opened the vault, who had mutilated and then abandoned my daughter; for he could not efface the traces of the theft. He had not even taken the trouble to put back the coffin into its place, feeling sure, besides, that he would not be suspected by me, as I trusted him absolutely.

"You see, monsieur, that we are very unfortunate people."

* * * * * * *

He was silent.

The night had fallen, casting its shadows over the desolate, mournful vale, and a sort of mysterious fear possessed me at finding myself by the side of those strange beings, of this young girl who had come back from the tomb, and this father with his uncanny spasm.

I found it impossible to make any comment on this dreadful story. I only murmured:

"What a horrible thing!"

Then, after a minute's silence, I added:

"Let us go indoors. I think it is growing cool."

And we made our way back to the hotel.

ALL OVER

COMTE DE LORMERIN had just finished dressing. He cast a parting glance at the large mirror which occupied an entire panel in his dressing-room and smiled.

He was really a fine-looking man still, although quite gray. Tall, slight, elegant, with no sign of a paunch, with a small mustache of doubtful shade, which might be called fair, he had a walk, a nobility, a "chic," in short, that indescribable something which establishes a greater difference between two men than would millions of money. He murmured:

"Lormerin is still alive!"

And he went into the drawing-room where his correspondence awaited him.

On his table, where everything had its place, the work table of the gentleman who never works, there were a dozen letters lying beside three newspapers of different opinions. With a single touch he spread out all these letters, like a gambler giving the choice of a card; and he scanned the handwriting, a thing he did each morning before opening the envelopes.

It was for him a moment of delightful expectancy, of inquiry and vague anxiety. What did these sealed mysterious letters bring him? What did they contain of pleasure, of happiness, or of grief? He surveyed them with a rapid sweep of the eye, recognizing the writing, selecting them, making two or

three lots, according to what he expected from them. Here, friends; there, persons to whom he was indifferent; further on, strangers. The last kind always gave him a little uneasiness. What did they want from him? What hand had traced those curious characters full of thoughts, promises, or threats?

This day one letter in particular caught his eye. It was simple, nevertheless, without seeming to reveal anything; but he looked at it uneasily, with a sort of chill at his heart. He thought: "From whom can it be? I certainly know this writing, and yet I can't identify it."

He raised it to a level with his face, holding it delicately between two fingers, striving to read through the envelope, without making up his mind to open it.

Then he smelled it, and snatched up from the table a little magnifying glass which he used in studying all the niceties of handwriting. He suddenly felt unnerved. "Whom is it from? This hand is familiar to me, very familiar. I must have often read its tracings, yes, very often. But this must have been a long, long time ago. Whom the deuce can it be from? Pooh! it's only somebody asking for money."

And he tore open the letter. Then he read:

MY DEAR FRIEND: You have, without doubt, forgotten me, for it is now twenty-five years since we saw each other. I was young; I am old. When I bade you farewell, I left Paris in order to follow into the provinces my husband, my old husband, whom you used to call "my hospital." Do you remember him? He died five years ago, and now I am returning to Paris to get my daughter married, for I have a daughter, a beautiful girl of eighteen, whom you have never seen. I informed you of her birth, but you certainly did not pay much attention to so trifling an event.

You are still the handsome Lormerin; so I have been told.

Well, if you still recollect little Lise, whom you used to call Lison, come and dine with her this evening, with the elderly Baronne de Vance, your ever faithful friend, who, with some emotion, although happy, reaches out to you a devoted hand, which you must clasp, but no longer kiss, my poor Jaquelet.

LISE DE VANCE.

Lormerin's heart began to throb. He remained sunk in his armchair with the letter on his knees, staring straight before him, overcome by a poignant emotion that made the tears mount up to his eyes!

If he had ever loved a woman in his life it was this one, little Lise, Lise de Vance, whom he called "Ashflower," on account of the strange color of her hair and the pale gray of her eyes. Oh! what a dainty, pretty, charming creature she was, this frail baronne, the wife of that gouty, pimply baron, who had abruptly carried her off to the provinces, shut her up, kept her in seclusion through jealousy, jealousy of the handsome Lormerin.

Yes, he had loved her, and he believed that he, too, had been truly loved. She familiarly gave him the name of Jaquelet, and would pronounce that word in a delicious fashion.

A thousand forgotten memories came back to him, far off and sweet and melancholy now. One evening she had called on him on her way home from a ball, and they went for a stroll in the Bois de Boulogne, she in evening dress, he in his dressing-jacket. It was springtime; the weather was beautiful. The fragrance from her bodice embalmed the warm air—the odor of her bodice, and perhaps, too, the fragrance of her skin. What a divine night! When they reached the lake, as the moon's rays fell across the branches into the water, she began to weep. A little surprised, he asked her why.

She replied:

"I don't know. The moon and the water have affected me. Every time I see poetic things I have a tightening at the heart, and I have to cry."

He smiled, affected himself, considering her feminine emotion charming—the unaffected emotion of a poor little woman whom every sensation overwhelms. And he embraced her passionately, stammering:

"My little Lise, you are exquisite."

What a charming love affair, short-lived and dainty, it had been and over all too quickly, cut short in the midst of its ardor by this old brute of a baron, who had carried off his wife, and never let any one see her afterward.

Lormerin had forgotten, in fact, at the end of two or three months. One woman drives out another so quickly in Paris, when one is a bachelor! No matter; he had kept a little altar for her in his heart, for he had loved her alone! He assured himself now that this was so.

He rose, and said aloud: "Certainly, I will go and dine with her this evening!"

And instinctively he turned toward the mirror to inspect himself from head to foot. He reflected: "She must look very old, older than I look." And he felt gratified at the thought of showing himself to her still handsome, still fresh, of astonishing her, perhaps of filling her with emotion, and making her regret those bygone days so far, far distant!

He turned his attention to the other letters. They were of no importance.

The whole day he kept thinking of this ghost of other days. What was she like now? How strange

it was to meet in this way after twenty-five years! But would he recognize her?

He made his toilet with feminine coquetry, put on a white waistcoat, which suited him better with the coat than a black one, sent for the hairdresser to give him a finishing touch with the curling iron, for he had preserved his hair, and started very early in order to show his eagerness to see her.

The first thing he saw on entering a pretty drawing-room newly furnished was his own portrait, an old faded photograph, dating from the days when he was a beau, hanging on the wall in an antique silk frame.

He sat down and waited. A door opened behind him. He rose up abruptly, and, turning round, beheld an old woman with white hair who extended both hands toward him.

He seized them, kissed them one after the other several times; then, lifting up his head, he gazed at the woman he had loved.

Yes, it was an old lady, an old lady whom he did not recognize, and who, while she smiled, seemed ready to weep.

He could not abstain from murmuring:

"Is it you, Lise?"

She replied:

"Yes, it is I; it is I, indeed. You would not have known me, would you? I have had so much sorrow—so much sorrow. Sorrow has consumed my life. Look at me now—or, rather, don't look at me! But how handsome you have kept—and young! If I had by chance met you in the street I would have exclaimed: 'Jaquelet!' Now, sit down and let us, first of all, have a chat. And then I will call my

daughter, my grown-up daughter. You'll see how she resembles me—or, rather, how I resembled her—no, it is not quite that; she is just like the 'me' of former days—you shall see! But I wanted to be alone with you first. I feared that there would be some emotion on my side, at the first moment. Now it is all over; it is past. Pray be seated, my friend."

He sat down beside her, holding her hand; but he did not know what to say; he did not know this woman—it seemed to him that he had never seen her before. Why had he come to this house? What could he talk about? Of the long ago? What was there in common between him and her? He could no longer recall anything in presence of this grandmotherly face. He could no longer recall all the nice, tender things, so sweet, so bitter, that had come to his mind that morning when he thought of the other, of little Lise, of the dainty Ashflower. What, then, had become of her, the former one, the one he had loved? That woman of far-off dreams, the blonde with gray eyes, the young girl who used to call him "Jaquelet" so prettily?

They remained side by side, motionless, both constrained, troubled, profoundly ill at ease.

As they talked only commonplaces, awkwardly and spasmodically and slowly, she rose and pressed the button of the bell.

"I am going to call Renée," she said.

There was a tap at the door, then the rustle of a dress; then a young voice exclaimed:

"Here I am, mamma!"

Lormerin remained bewildered as at the sight of an apparition.

He stammered:

"Good-day, mademoiselle."

Then, turning toward the mother:

"Oh! it is you!"

In fact, it was she, she whom he had known in bygone days, the Lise who had vanished and come back! In her he found the woman he had won twenty-five years before. This one was even younger, fresher, more childlike.

He felt a wild desire to open his arms, to clasp her to his heart again, murmuring in her ear:

"Good-morning, Lison!"

A man-servant announced:

"Dinner is ready, madame."

And they proceeded toward the dining-room.

What passed at this dinner? What did they say to him, and what could he say in reply? He found himself plunged in one of those strange dreams which border on insanity. He gazed at the two women with a fixed idea in his mind, a morbid, self-contradictory idea:

"Which is the real one?"

The mother smiled, repeating over and over again:

"Do you remember?" And it was in the bright eyes of the young girl that he found again his memories of the past. Twenty times he opened his mouth to say to her: "Do you remember, Lison?" forgetting this white-haired lady who was looking at him tenderly.

And yet, there were moments when he no longer felt sure, when he lost his head. He could see that the woman of to-day was not exactly the woman of long ago. The other one, the former one, had in her voice, in her glances, in her entire being, some-

thing which he did not find again. And he made prodigious efforts of mind to recall his lady love, to seize again what had escaped from her, what this resuscitated one did not possess.

The baronne said:

"You have lost your old vivacity, my poor friend."

He murmured:

"There are many other things that I have lost!"

But in his heart, touched with emotion, he felt his old love springing to life once more, like an awakened wild beast ready to bite him.

The young girl went on chattering, and every now and then some familiar intonation, some expression of her mother's, a certain style of speaking and thinking, that resemblance of mind and manner which people acquire by living together, shook Lormerin from head to foot. All these things penetrated him, making the reopened wound of his passion bleed anew.

He got away early, and took a turn along the boulevard. But the image of this young girl pursued him, haunted him, quickened his heart, inflamed his blood. Apart from the two women, he now saw only one, a young one, the old one come back out of the past, and he loved her as he had loved her in bygone years. He loved her with greater ardor, after an interval of twenty-five years.

He went home to reflect on this strange and terrible thing, and to think what he should do.

But, as he was passing, with a wax candle in his hand, before the glass, the large glass in which he had contemplated himself and admired himself before he started, he saw reflected there an elderly,

gray-haired man; and suddenly he recollected what he had been in olden days, in the days of little Lise. He saw himself charming and handsome, as he had been when he was loved! Then, drawing the light nearer, he looked at himself more closely, as one inspects a strange thing with a magnifying glass, tracing the wrinkles, discovering those frightful ravages, which he had not perceived till now.

And he sat down, crushed at the sight of himself, at the sight of his lamentable image, murmuring:

"All over, Lormerin!"

THE PARROT

I

EVERYBODY in Fécamp knew Mother Patin's story. She had certainly been unfortunate with her husband, for in his lifetime he used to beat her, just as wheat is threshed in the barn.

He was master of a fishing bark and had married her, formerly, because she was pretty, although poor.

Patin was a good sailor, but brutal. He used to frequent Father Auban's inn, where he would usually drink four or five glasses of brandy, on lucky days eight or ten glasses and even more, according to his mood. The brandy was served to the customers by Father Auban's daughter, a pleasing brunette, who attracted people to the house only by her pretty face, for nothing had ever been gossiped about her.

Patin, when he entered the inn, would be satisfied to look at her and to compliment her politely and respectfully. After he had had his first glass of brandy he would already find her much nicer; at the second he would wink; at the third he would say: "If you were only willing, Mam'zelle Désirée——" without ever finishing his sentence; at the fourth he would try to hold her back by her skirt in order to kiss her; and when he went as high as ten it was Father Auban who brought him the remaining drinks.

The old innkeeper, who knew all the tricks of the

trade, made Désirée walk about between the tables in order to increase the consumption of drinks; and Désirée, who was a worthy daughter of Father Auban, flitted around among the benches and joked with them, her lips smiling and her eyes sparkling.

Patin got so well accustomed to Désirée's face that he thought of it even while at sea, when throwing out his nets, in storms or in calms, on moonlit or dark evenings. He thought of her while holding the tiller in the stern of his boat, while his four companions were slumbering with their heads on their arms. He always saw her, smiling, pouring out the yellow brandy with a peculiar shoulder movement and then exclaiming as she turned away: "There, now; are you satisfied?"

He saw her so much in his mind's eye that he was overcome by an irresistible desire to marry her, and, not being able to hold out any longer, he asked for her hand.

He was rich, owned his own vessel, his nets and a little house at the foot of the hill on the Retenue, whereas Father Auban had nothing. The marriage was therefore eagerly agreed upon and the wedding took place as soon as possible, as both parties were desirous for the affair to be concluded as early as convenient.

Three days after the wedding Patin could no longer understand how he had ever imagined Désirée to be different from other women. What a fool he had been to encumber himself with a penniless creature, who had undoubtedly inveigled him with some drug which she had put in his brandy!

He would curse all day long, break his pipe with his teeth and maul his crew. After he had sworn

by every known term at everything that came his way he would rid himself of his remaining anger on the fish and lobsters, which he pulled from the nets and threw into the baskets amid oaths and foul language. When he returned home he would find his wife, Father Auban's daughter, within reach of his mouth and hand, and it was not long before he treated her like the lowest creature in the world. As she listened calmly, accustomed to paternal violence, he grew exasperated at her quiet, and one evening he beat her. Then life at his home became unbearable.

For ten years the principal topic of conversation on the Retenue was about the beatings that Patin gave his wife and his manner of cursing at her for the least thing. He could, indeed, curse with a richness of vocabulary in a roundness of tone unequalled by any other man in Fécamp. As soon as his ship was sighted at the entrance of the harbor, returning from the fishing expedition, every one awaited the first volley he would hurl from the bridge as soon as he perceived his wife's white cap.

Standing at the stern, he would steer, his eye fixed on the bows and on the sail, and, notwithstanding the difficulty of the narrow passage and the height of the turbulent waves, he would search among the watching women and try to recognize his wife, Father Auban's daughter, the wretch!

Then, as soon as he saw her, notwithstanding the noise of the wind and waves, he would let loose upon her with such power and volubility that every one would laugh, although they pitied her greatly. When he arrived at the dock he would relieve his mind, while unloading the fish, in such an expressive manner that he attracted around him all the loafers

of the neighborhood. The words left his mouth sometimes like shots from a cannon, short and terrible, sometimes like peals of thunder, which roll and rumble for five minutes, such a hurricane of oaths that he seemed to have in his lungs one of the storms of the Eternal Father.

When he left his ship and found himself face to face with her, surrounded by all the gossips of the neighborhood, he would bring up a new cargo of insults and bring her back to their dwelling, she in front, he behind, she weeping, he yelling at her.

At last, when alone with her behind closed doors, he would thrash her on the slightest pretext. The least thing was sufficient to make him raise his hand, and when he had once begun he did not stop, but he would throw into her face the true motive for his anger. At each blow he would roar: "There, you beggar! There, you wretch! There, you pauper! What a bright thing I did when I rinsed my mouth with your rascal of a father's apology for brandy!"

The poor woman lived in continual fear, in a ceaseless trembling of body and soul, in everlasting expectation of outrageous thrashings.

This lasted ten years. She was so timorous that she would grow pale whenever she spoke to any one, and she thought of nothing but the blows with which she was threatened; and she became thinner, more yellow and drier than a smoked fish.

II

One night, when her husband was at sea, she was suddenly awakened by the wild roaring of the wind!

She sat up in her bed, trembling, but, as she heard nothing more, she lay down again; almost immediately there was a roar in the chimney which shook the entire house; it seemed to cross the heavens like a pack of furious animals snorting and roaring.

Then she arose and rushed to the harbor. Other women were arriving from all sides, carrying lanterns. The men also were gathering, and all were watching the foaming crests of the breaking waves.

The storm lasted fifteen hours. Eleven sailors never returned; Patin was among them.

In the neighborhood of Dieppe the wreck of his bark, the *Jeune-Amélie,* was found. The bodies of his sailors were found near Saint-Valéry, but his body was never recovered. As his vessel seemed to have been cut in two, his wife expected and feared his return for a long time, for if there had been a collision he alone might have been picked up and carried afar off.

Little by little she grew accustomed to the thought that she was rid of him, although she would start every time that a neighbor, a beggar or a peddler would enter suddenly.

One afternoon, about four years after the disappearance of her husband, while she was walking along the Rue aux Juifs, she stopped before the house of an old sea captain who had recently died and whose furniture was for sale. Just at that moment a parrot was at auction. He had green feathers and a blue head and was watching everybody with a displeased look. "Three francs!" cried the auctioneer. "A bird that can talk like a lawyer, three francs!"

A friend of the Patin woman nudged her and said:

"You ought to buy that, you who are rich. It would be good company for you. That bird is worth more than thirty francs. Anyhow, you can always sell it for twenty or twenty-five!"

Patin's widow added fifty centimes, and the bird was given her in a little cage, which she carried away. She took it home, and, as she was opening the wire door in order to give it something to drink, he bit her finger and drew blood.

"Oh, how naughty he is!" she said.

Nevertheless she gave it some hemp-seed and corn and watched it pruning its feathers as it glanced warily at its new home and its new mistress.

On the following morning, just as day was breaking, the Patin woman distinctly heard a loud, deep, roaring voice calling: "Are you going to get up, carrion?"

Her fear was so great that she hid her head under the sheets, for when Patin was with her as soon as he would open his eyes he would shout those well-known words into her ears.

Trembling, rolled into a ball, her back prepared for the thrashing which she already expected, her face buried in the pillows, she murmured: "Good Lord! he is here! Good Lord! he is here! Good Lord! he has come back!"

Minutes passed; no noise disturbed the quiet room. Then, trembling, she stuck her head out of the bed, sure that he was there, watching, ready to beat her. Except for a ray of sun shining through the window, she saw nothing, and she said to herself: "He must be hidden."

She waited a long time and then, gaining courage,

she said to herself: "I must have dreamed it, seeing there is nobody here."

A little reassured, she closed her eyes, when from quite near a furious voice, the thunderous voice of the drowned man, could be heard crying: "Say! when in the name of all that's holy are you going to get up, you b——?"

She jumped out of bed, moved by obedience, by the passive obedience of a woman accustomed to blows and who still remembers and always will remember that voice! She said: "Here I am, Patin; what do you want?"

But Patin did not answer. Then, at a complete loss, she looked around her, then in the chimney and under the bed and finally sank into a chair, wild with anxiety, convinced that Patin's soul alone was there, near her, and that he had returned in order to torture her.

Suddenly she remembered the loft, in order to reach which one had to take a ladder. Surely he must have hidden there in order to surprise her. He must have been held by savages on some distant shore, unable to escape until now, and he had returned, worse that ever. There was no doubting the quality of that voice. She raised her head and asked: "Are you up there, Patin?"

Patin did not answer. Then, with a terrible fear which made her heart tremble, she climbed the ladder, opened the skylight, looked, saw nothing, entered, looked about and found nothing. Sitting on some straw, she began to cry, but while she was weeping, overcome by a poignant and supernatural terror, she heard Patin talking in the room below.

He seemed less angry and he was saying: "Nasty weather! Fierce wind! Nasty weather! I haven't eaten, damn it!"

She cried through the ceiling: "Here I am, Patin; I am getting your meal ready. Don't get angry."

She ran down again. There was no one in the room. She felt herself growing weak, as if death were touching her, and she tried to run and get help from the neighbors, when a voice near her cried out: "I haven't had my breakfast, by G——!"

And the parrot in his cage watched her with his round, knowing, wicked eye. She, too, looked at him wildly, murmuring: "Ah! so it's you!"

He shook his head and continued: "Just you wait! I'll teach you how to loaf."

What happened within her? She felt, she understood that it was he, the dead man, who had come back, who had disguised himself in the feathers of this bird in order to continue to torment her; that he would curse, as formerly, all day long, and bite her, and swear at her, in order to attract the neighbors and make them laugh. Then she rushed for the cage and seized the bird, which scratched and tore her flesh with its claws and beak. But she held it with all her strength between her hands. She threw it on the ground and rolled over it with the frenzy of one possessed. She crushed it and finally made of it nothing but a little green, flabby lump which no longer moved or spoke. Then she wrapped it in a cloth, as in a shroud, and she went out in her nightgown, barefoot; she crossed the dock, against which the choppy waves of the sea were beating, and she shook the cloth and let drop this little dead thing,

which looked like so much grass. Then she returned, threw herself on her knees before the empty cage, and, overcome by what she had done, kneeled and prayed for forgiveness, as if she had committed some heinous crime.

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